Interview with Ambassador A. Ellen Shippy

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR A. ELLEN SHIPPY

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is August 27, 2001. This is an interview with Ellen Shippy. Do you have a middle initial?

SHIPPY: It is Amelia Ellen Shippy.

Q: Amelia Ellen Shippy. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Let's start at the beginning. Can you tell me when and where you were born, and a little bit about your family?

SHIPPY: I was born October 23, 1944 in Denver, Colorado. My parents moved to Silver City, New Mexico when I was two years old, and I grew up in Silver City. I have one sister, Jean, who is four years younger than I am. My father taught high school physics and chemistry, and my mother worked as a secretary in a local elementary school.

Q: Well now, let's talk about your father's family. What were the roots of the Shippy family?

SHIPPY: My father, Homer Charles Shippy, was born in Iowa. His father and two of his father's brothers went from Iowa to Limon, Colorado to homestead in that area, which is on the plains east of the Rockies. He grew up in Limon. His mother claimed to be descended

from Sir Isaac Newton, but I'm not aware that claim has been researched. My father's family was a farm family; both of his parents were teachers as well as engaged in farming.

Q: Where had they been able to go to, probably a normal school or the equivalent, to be a teacher?

SHIPPY: I don't know how his parents became teachers. My father went to grade school in Limon and was sent to Denver for high school, where he lived with one of his aunts. He taught in country schools for six years before he went to college.

Q: Where did he go to college?

SHIPPY: He got a Bachelor of Science in 1936 from Colorado State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (now Colorado State University) in Fort Collins, Colorado. He earned a Master's Degree from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico in 1953, going summers, while we lived in Silver City.

Q: He was a teacher of what, physics?

SHIPPY: Physics and chemistry; he also taught general science and general math.

Q: What about your mother; where did she come from?

SHIPPY: My mother's name was Amelia Giles. (I was named after her, but was called by my middle name, Ellen, so there wouldn't be two “Amelias” in the house.) Her mother's family were German immigrants by the name of Kroeger. They came to the United States in the 1800s, migrated across the U.S. and ended up just outside of Durango, Colorado in the late 1800s. Her father, James Tandy Giles, was of English heritage. There is a good story about his marriage to my mother's mother. He was several years older than she was. He wanted to get married, but she said that she was too sickly and would not be able to get married. Something like ten years later he asked her again, and she finally agreed. They had four children. My mother is the third youngest, two older sisters and a younger

brother. My mother's father died from a heart attack at the dinner table when she was young, about nine years old, and her mother brought up the four children, taking in sewing, renting out the pasture, chopping ice from the creek in winter to sell, making a go of things.

Q: Were there any stories about, I think during WWI or so, there was a great expansion of the central plains, particularly the high plateau around Colorado and then the rain went away. It was a very rough time in that part of the central plains.

SHIPPY: My father always felt that his family was poor. They had five kids in the family, and there were times when his father would be teaching and living at one school and his mother would be teaching and living at another school in a different community. They were basically separated and only saw each other on school vacations when they would go back to their house to get together. They were dry land farmers and often made no income from farming because of the dryness. They went into teaching to have another source of income. Durango, Colorado is in the southwest corner of Colorado and really not part of the Great Plains. My mother's mother was keeping a family together without a husband and times were hard, but she did it and did it well.

Q: Well you moved where, you went to New Mexico when you were very small.

SHIPPY: When I was two. My father had worked for a man named Kostenbader in Erie, Colorado. Kostenbader moved down to Silver City, New Mexico to become principal of the high school. He offered my father a teaching job in the high school there. My father took it, and we moved down when I was two years old. At that time, New Mexico paid teachers better than Colorado did.

Q: This would be 1946, right after the war. What was Silver City like?

SHIPPY: Silver City was a small town. It had about 8,000 people in it. The town was originally based on mining, not particularly silver, although originally there had been some silver mines. There was a big Kennecott copper operation about 15 miles away.

Phelps Dodge had another copper mine about 15 miles away in another direction, which was closed when I was growing up. They later reopened it. There was cattle ranching in the area. Silver City is in the southwest corner of New Mexico. It forms a triangle with Lordsburg and Deming. Lordsburg and Deming are both on main routes through the state, but Silver City is not.

Q: Close to Arizona and to Mexico?

SHIPPY: Reasonably. Silver City is also the gateway to the Gila Wilderness, which was the first primitive area designated by the U.S. Congress.

Q: As a young girl, what was it like. I mean we are talking about elementary school particularly. How was it then?

SHIPPY: Silver City was a good place to grow up. It was a small town with a teacher's college. Fortunately in those days we didn't have to be afraid of strangers. We had pretty free run. We lived on the outskirts of town, and there were hills around, and we were allowed to wander around the hills with cautions about staying away from abandoned quarries. The elementary school I went to, called the “Laboratory School,” was attached to the teacher training college in Silver City; it was not the public elementary school. We had small classes of 16 each in a class, with two classes per classroom (1st and 2nd, 3rd and 4th, etc.). We had many student teachers from the college. The regular teachers were very good teachers, and we had good basic grounding.

Q: Well in elementary school on the whole, what were your principal interests?

SHIPPY: In elementary school? That is a long time ago. I always liked to read. We had a third grade teacher who had a program where, if you read a certain number of books, you got to do a special project. There were several of us who were always reading a lot and doing special projects. When I was in fifth grade I got polio. I was out of school for six weeks, and then had to wear funny (orthopedic) shoes. The children's rehab hospital was

in a town called Truth or Consequences, which was several hours away. We had to drive over there once a month, so that I could get physical therapy.

Q: Truth or Consequences, I remember as a young lad, it got its name, they put it up...

SHIPPY: The TV show Truth or Consequences made a proposal that if any town would accept the name Truth or Consequence, they would get some money and be able to host the show with its host, Ralph Edwards, once a year. In the New Mexico town Hot Springs, part of the town wanted to do this, and part didn't. The part that wanted to did so, got the money and became Truth or Consequences. There is still a Hot Springs there, as well.

Q: Because the town Silver City was so small, I am assuming you had the normal amenities like a library and a movie theater and that sort of thing.

SHIPPY: Yes, we had two indoor movie theaters and two drive-ins. We had a library. In fact I think my first paying job (after baby-sitting) was working in the library. I worked in the library probably from late grade school all the way through high school.

Q: You were right in your briar patch weren't you?

SHIPPY: Yes.

Q: It is always dangerous to put a reader in a library.

SHIPPY: I have always described Silver City as being well known because that is where Billy the Kid got his start. His mother ran a boarding house there.

Q: I take it after that the trouble didn't multiply.

SHIPPY: No. Silver City is also interesting because there was a flash flood down Main Street, I think it was the late 1800s, and it wiped out Main Street, so all the businesses had to make their back door into their front door. A new Main Street developed; the commercial

establishments that were on that side lucked out, and the ones that were on the other side lost out.

Q: What about, one always thinks of New Mexico, what about Hispanics and Indians? Were there any in that area?

SHIPPY: Yes. There is one other story. There is a saloon on Main Street where cowboys were known to ride their horses into the saloon. We had many Hispanics. The high school was probably about 50% Hispanic. There were many Hispanics in town, mostly people from Mexico or whose parents were from Mexico. No Native Americans. The Native Americans live in other parts of the state, although there used to be Apaches in the areas around Silver City.

Q: How did the Hispanics or Mexicans, American Mexicans and Anglos mix it up?

SHIPPY: Well, not a lot. Of course we were all in class together. The athletic teams and the band and the other after-school activities were a mix. But there was not a lot of socializing among groups.

Q: By the time you got to high school, particularly in that period, today it might be different, but I know high schools they sometimes have tracks. You take the commercial course or the course pointed toward college. Was that happening at your high school at that time?

SHIPPY: Yes, somewhat. We had 450 students in the high school, so it wasn't large. I think there were 87 in my graduating class. The students that expected to go on to college took sciences and math and language more so than students who didn't expect to go to college. I was fortunate because the high school initiated a new college prep track in my freshman year. We were able to take advanced math and science courses.

Q: Your father was teaching at that high school.

SHIPPY: Right.

Q: How about in high school? What sort of activities were you involved?

SHIPPY: Well, when I was in grade school, I started 4-H, and I remained a member of 4-H through the end of high school.

Q: That is farming or...

SHIPPY: Yes, it's an organization for boys and girls to learn good farming and home economics methods. Now it branches out into all sorts of other things.

Q: You were sort of town kid weren't you?

SHIPPY: Yes.

Q: Well how did you work the sort of projects you had?

SHIPPY: I did projects in baking, cooking, sewing, canning, freezing, and textile painting; I think I did photography once. I didn't raise animals or grow vegetables.

Q: I was thinking all of a sudden you arrived with a calf and said look what I have got.

SHIPPY: No. The advantage of 4-H was that it could be adapted to the circumstances; they now have inner city 4-H groups. I never did go into farming and raising animals. I was also active in Rainbow Girls while I was in high school.

Q: In courses, were you sort of concentrating on any particular area?

SHIPPY: No. Just English, science, math, history, French, kind of general. I didn't take PE. I played in the band. At that time, if you played in the band, you didn't have to take PE. I played trombone.

Q: I guess you had a safe distance between you and the person in front of you.

SHIPPY: Right. You asked what else I did in high school. I played chess. My father was the sponsor of the chess club. One year when I was on the chess club, we won first place in the state tournament. Certainly not because of my prowess, but we had some very good chess players on the team that year. I was also in the National Honor Society, and took part in at least one play.

Q: Were you pointed towards any place? You were pointed towards college I assume.

SHIPPY: Right.

Q: Where did you go?

SHIPPY: I went to the University of New Mexico.

Q: This would have been, you started in 1956 I think.

SHIPPY: College? No, in 1962.

Q: 1962. While you were in high school, did the outer world intrude much in high school, because we are talking about someone who is going to be involved in international affairs?

SHIPPY: I didn't know about the Foreign Service until I was in the Peace Corps. I had no clue growing up that the Foreign Service existed. I knew that we had U.S. embassies abroad, but I never gave a thought as to who staffed them. The one vivid memory I have of the outer world is that of Father Killian Dreiling, a priest who had escaped from Hungary in 1956 I guess, talking to us.

Q: It would have been 1956.

SHIPPY: Yes. Well he came over and eventually ended up in Silver City. He gave lectures on dialectical materialism. I still remember his diagrams explaining that.

Q: Around the dining room table, were there discussions of politics or anything of that nature?

SHIPPY: I don't remember.

Q: Did, the cold war, did nuclear, New Mexico of course was a testing ground and I guess White Sands missile places.

SHIPPY: Right.

Q: Was this a subject of much interest?

SHIPPY: I don't remember it being so. Silver City is a pretty isolated little town. It is not on the main road to anywhere. Certainly we had radio and newspapers, and in the later years television. I had an interest in foreign lands. I was going through some papers a few years ago and read the essay that I had written when I applied for a General Motors scholarship for college. (I got the scholarship.). In that essay, I said that what I wanted to do when I got out of college was to live and work overseas.

Q: Did you run across anybody who had overseas experience?

SHIPPY: A person who was some years ahead of me babysat my sister and me; she was one of my father's students. Her father had worked in the Defense Attach#'s Office in Moscow, so there was a vague connection there.

Q: But it wasn't something that really made much of an impression.

SHIPPY: No.

Q: Then in 1962 you went to the University of New Mexico?

SHIPPY: Right.

Q: Where is that located?

SHIPPY: In Albuquerque. I had wanted to go out of state, and I was looking at the University of Michigan, but it was too expensive, so I went to Albuquerque. This was from Silver City, so Albuquerque was fairly far away., The summer before I went to college, my family moved to Gallup, New Mexico, which is in the northwest corner of the state very close to the Navajo reservation and only about two or two and a half hours from Albuquerque. So the family was closer than I thought they would be.

Q: There is a little snow up in Gallup.

SHIPPY: There is indeed. My father hates snow, and the first winter they were there, it was snowy, and got down to 54 degrees below zero. (Kids walking to school got frostbite on their hands.) Father was really wondering what he'd gotten into. My folks moved because Kostenbader had gone to Gallup and he offered my father a job there in a junior high school. My sister went to junior and senior high school in Gallup.

Q: Well, Gallup, of course, is a bigger city right on the railroad tracks.

SHIPPY: Correct. In addition, it was right on Route 66, and is now on I-40. The population of Gallup was around 16,000; Silver City was around 8,000.

Q: Well you were at the University of New Mexico from 1962 to 1966. How did you find the University of New Mexico when you first got there?

SHIPPY: I suppose I found it overwhelming. At about 10,000 students, it was larger than Silver City. But I was in a women's dorm. You make your circle of friends, and you operate that way. Many classes were very large. We had a huge freshman chemistry class. The

teacher would show slides of pages from the textbook, but he would put in a Playboy bunny every so often to make sure that people would stay awake. At the Spring Fiesta, wearing a big sombrero, he would ride into the classroom on a donkey. At the freshman level, most of the classes were large lectures with little contact with the professor. I was in an honors program, and those were small discussion groups. We read books and discussed them, so that provided a smaller class setting with more teacher attention.

Q: What was your major?

SHIPPY: I ended up majoring in mathematics because by the time I had to decide, it was easier to go ahead and do a major in math than anything else. I minored in English.

Q: What about again, international affairs? Was there much in the way of people coming and talking or courses or what have you?

SHIPPY: There was some, but nothing that leaves a huge impression in my memory. It seems to me that at one of the presidential campaigns, we all went off and saw one of the candidates, but I don't remember who it was.

Q: Well, you were there more or less, you arrived at the University of New Mexico shortly before the Cuban missile crisis. Was this something that was happening far away?

SHIPPY: Yes, it was. I remember Kennedy's assassination. I worked continually through college. I worked in the college library for about a year. I worked in the dorm at the Reception Desk. My junior year I was president of the women's dorms. In my senior year I was a Residence Adviser. One of the benefits of that was that you got a single room. Obviously we discussed current events, but I don't remember any major event. I do know that when Kennedy started the Peace Corps I thought, “Ah that is exactly what I want to do. I will finish college and then I will join the Peace Corps.” That course was set.

Q: Well you graduated in 1966. Besides, you had a major in math. Did that point you towards anything?

SHIPPY: The major didn't because I figured to do something in math I would have to get at least a masters if not a doctorate, and I was not that interested in it. So I knew that I would have to do something else. But it wasn't an immediate concern because I was going to go into the Peace Corps.

Q: Well how did you make contact, how did you get into the Peace Corps?

SHIPPY: I got an application form, sent it in and was accepted.

Q: Did you have any particular place in mind?

SHIPPY: I think I probably asked for Latin America just because I took French in high school, and I took German in college, but I had heard Spanish all my life. So I decided that it was time to learn Spanish. My guess is that I asked for Latin America. I don't really remember.

Q: Well, so you went into the Peace Corps in 1966.

SHIPPY: That's right.

Q: And you were in two years or what?

SHIPPY: Yes, two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in El Salvador.

Q: 1966 to 1968. Where did you go for training and how did the training work?

SHIPPY: They were still doing training in the U.S. Now they do it in the country of assignment. We trained in Norman, Oklahoma, at the north campus of the University of Oklahoma. The buildings were barracks left over from WWII. A pretty awful place, but we

had a great time. That was when they still had psychiatrists looking at the trainees, and you had to make a list of the trainees you thought would succeed and those you thought would not. That parjudging your peers — was really pretty bad.

Q: It sounds like somebody was playing games.

SHIPPY: Yes. That was standard at the time. But we also got to do Outward Bound training which Peace Corps later quit doing. That meant we had a drown proofing course in the water. We learned to rappel. We did a three day excursion into the Wichita Mountains and had encounters with buffalo. That was fun. We had a good training program in Oklahoma, and then we went to Mexico for I think three-plus weeks to use our language and get some cultural exposure. We spent some days in Vera Cruz, ten days in Tlaxcala, and a couple of days in Mexico City. That was great fun.

Q: Did you have assignments when you were in these places?

SHIPPY: I don't think so. We didn't have specific tasks. It was more get to know the people of the village, but we weren't supposed to teach them something or build anything.

Q: How did you find your Spanish coming along?

SHIPPY: Good.

Q: How did you find the group of people that you met going into the Peace Corps, a pretty mixed group?

SHIPPY: My fellow trainees?

Q: Yes.

SHIPPY: Oh, it was pretty mixed. Our group was all going to do 4-C work in El Salvador. (4-C is their equivalent of 4-H.) A large part of our group was from the Midwest, and a

large part had either home-economics or agriculture experience from college, college majors. I think almost everyone had been in 4-H. We all got along, for the most part, very well. We were a tight group.

Q: Now was El Salvador just something you picked out of a hat? Had you any choice in the matter?

SHIPPY: No, we hadn't. I got the letter saying I was going there, so I looked on the map to see where it was. One thing of interest in our group, we had one guy who was an American Indian from Idaho. I haven't been in touch with him for awhile, but he is apparently now (or was) a member of the tribe's governing council. We had a Japanese-American from Hawaii who couldn't swim. No African Americans and no Hispanic Americans in the group.

Q: Well when you went to El Salvador, where did they put you?

SHIPPY: In a small village of about 2,000 people in the middle of nowhere: San Pablo Tacachico. You had to want to go there because it wasn't on the way to anywhere; it was very hot and humid. All of us were assigned to Agriculture Extension offices, except for one guy who worked with Boy Scouts in San Salvador, the capital city. The single women ended up in offices where there had been only a male Salvadoran Agricultural Extension Agent. The married couples and the single men generally went into larger offices. I had problems with my co-worker. He drank a lot, and was having an affair with the secretary I roomed with when I first went there. I eventually moved out of that situation and started living with the local nurse, which worked out fine. Peace Corps was a great experience; the Salvadorans are wonderful people.

Q: In the town or village, what were they doing there?

SHIPPY: They farmed.

Q: What sort of farming?

SHIPPY: Corn, lots and lots of corn. There was a big sugar factory a distance from the town. I don't think anybody from Tacachico worked on the sugar fields; they farmed small corn patches, a few vegetables, a very small amount of business.

Q: Pretty much barter exchange?

SHIPPY: Yes, the farmers.

Q: What sort of, what was the government like in this time?

SHIPPY: There was a mayor. In fact I ate with the mayor's family. I think pretty much what he said was the way things were.

Q: You didn't have people coming in from the capital and prancing around?

SHIPPY: No. The president of the country at that time was known for going around the country in a Volkswagen beetle and seeing how things were going, but he never came to Tacachico while I was there. I didn't recall that anybody really came to this town. As I said, it was out of the way and poor.

Q: What were you doing?

SHIPPY: I was working with 4-C clubs, so I was working with boys and girls. We would do chickens, and we did vegetables, and we did cooking, and we did a bit of sewing. Then I worked with parents to get them to be supportive of the clubs. I worked in the village itself and in some of the outlying communities, one of which I went to by bus, one of which was close enough to walk to. For the third, when I could manage it, I used the mayor's big white mule. This third place was up a hill that was pretty steep.

Q: I would think that if you have a village which depends on corn, you know, I mean a very low level of agriculture and support, that it would be hard to get kids to work for the 4-C club or something.

SHIPPY: I was generally dealing with kids who went to school, not kids from families who needed the children at home working, although as I recall most kids were going to school. Salvadorans are extremely hard workers, and they really want to get ahead. I think parents saw it as another way of giving their kids some skills that would help.

Q: How did you feel that your teaching, your work in this 4-C club, during the time you were there, how did it work out?

SHIPPY: I think it went pretty well, but I don't think I built any lasting institutions. When I left, another person replaced me, but he didn't finish his two years there, and the government didn't add another person to the office. One person can't do everything, and when things go, the 4-C clubs are the first to go. So I think I helped the people I worked with, and I think I helped their parents.

Q: Were you aware of sort of national, I am talking about El Salvadoran politics intruding?

SHIPPY: No, Tacachico was not in the coffee area. The whole problem of the coffee estates and the migrant workers was not an issue in Tacachico. I think the roots of the problem that eventually erupted into the civil war were there while I was there, but we expected Guatemala to go first if either country was going to go. The Salvadorans would move very quickly from a verbal argument to knives or machetes. The nurse I lived with was always patching up people with machete wounds, and often from fights not from cutting something and the machete slipped. So there was a tendency towards violence.

Q: Drinking?

SHIPPY: A lot of drinking. Salvador makes great beer.

Q: How did you observe the relationship and the work of men and women? Was it...

SHIPPY: It was then a traditional Latin setup. Women deferred to men. Women were discriminated against socially, culturally and legally. Some women didn't like it, but they were bringing their sons up in exactly the same ways; not much was going to change.

Q: Did you find you had any problem being a woman or being an American?

SHIPPY: No.

Q: You were different.

SHIPPY: I have never found problems. Only in a few instances have I noticed anything at all. My feeling is if you take the attitude that you are where you should be and you are doing what you should be, and you expect to be treated like a Peace Corp Volunteer or like a diplomat, that you are. The rules that normally apply to the women in whatever country are suspended because you are not a woman. You are a diplomat or a Peace Corps Volunteer, but you have to act with self confidence.

Q: Did you run across the embassy or Foreign Service at all when you were there?

SHIPPY: No. Well in those days there was almost a prohibition about dealing with the Embassy or AID. It just wasn't done at all. You had no contact with them. The Ambassador, Bill Bowdler, welcomed us to El Salvador and attended the wedding of two of the Volunteers, but that was about it. The Peace Corps director attended Country Team meetings at the Embassy, but the Volunteers didn't have anything to do with it. (We also couldn't travel to the United States unless approved by the Peace Corps Staff in an emergency situation.) There was an AID demonstration project on corn to convince the farmers to use hybrid seeds and fertilizer to increase their yields. USAID did one of their demonstration plots in Tacachico, so I was involved insofar as I saw the plot and watched them work on it, but that was it. While I was in El Salvador, I was told by other Volunteers

about the Foreign Service Exam and how hard it was. I was intrigued by the idea of being in the Foreign Service, but I really took the Exam to see how hard it was, and to see if I could pass it. So I took the Exam as Peace Corps Volunteer.

Q: Did you take it down in Salvador?

SHIPPY: Yes.

Q: How did you find the exam?

SHIPPY: I found it difficult, but I lucked out and I passed it.

Q: I guess your working in a library and reading a lot paid off at that point.

SHIPPY: I think so. The Silver City paper was not great on international news, but I had read Newsweek every week for many years, and I kept reading it while I was in El Salvador. I think that is what got me over the hump.

Q: You left in 1968, just finished your tour in El Salvador.

SHIPPY: Right.

Q: So then what were you thinking of doing? I mean you had taken the Foreign Service Exam?

SHIPPY: I took the Foreign Service Exam in 1967. It was given in November, and you were supposed to take the oral exam within X number of months, but they waived that if you were overseas with Peace Corps, and you could take it when you came back to the United States. At the end of our Peace Corps tour, three girlfriends and I left El Salvador in late October 1968 and came back to New Mexico. We traveled around New Mexico together for awhile. (The three were from the Midwest and hadn't been in New Mexico before.) Then we went to our respective homes for the holidays. Immediately after

Christmas, I got on the train and came to Washington for the Oral Exam, which I took in January of 1969. I passed it.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions or how the exam was set up?

SHIPPY: I remember one of the questions was about a hypothetical situation where U.S. boats were fishing without licenses in waters Ecuador claimed. The Ecuadorians had seized an American boat and its crew and captain. I was asked, “What are you going to do about it?” I went through various scenarios, and the Examiners would say “doesn't work; what next?” Finally I said I would send in the Mission Impossible team. They all laughed and we went on.

Q: By the time you had taken the exam and all, were you getting any information about what this was all about, the Foreign Service?

SHIPPY: Yes. by that time I had of course learned it was the Foreign Service that staffs embassies overseas. Living and working overseas for the government attracted me more than doing so for a private company.

Q: Well now we are talking about 1968ish and all, how about Vietnam and all that? Did that engage you at all?

SHIPPY: Some of my fellow Volunteers joined Peace Corps to avoid the draft; we had long discussions about the war. My best friend's brother was in the army in Vietnam. He had re-upped and had just gone back for a second tour, and was killed about a week after getting back. That was a major trauma. So yes, the War was very much on our minds.

Q: Did you have any feel for, I mean were you joining the enemy by going to the State Department or not?

SHIPPY: After I took the oral exam I was trying to find something to do, and I ended up getting a job recruiting for Peace Corps in the Midwest. The other recruiters, fellow

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, were fairly leftist as one might imagine. The Foreign Service called and offered me a position in the summer A-100 class.

Q: This was June of 1968?

SHIPPY: June of 1969, whatever summer month that class was in. It may have been August. The job offer was for me to work in CORDS in Vietnam. I said yes. All of my fellow recruiters were horrified and tried to talk me out of it. In the end I decided against accepting, not because of CORDS or Vietnam, but because I figured as a woman, they would put me in Saigon. If I were going to do it, I wanted to be out in the hinterlands. So I called and said that after thinking about it, I declined the offer. They said, “You may be passing up your chance to join the Foreign Service.”

Q: The standard line.

SHIPPY: I said, “So be it.” Then after awhile I got another call that said do you want to join the January class, January of 1970, no strings attached? I said, “Sure.”

Q: I was interviewing Sam Smith who got the same thing. He went in his class, and found out there were other people who refused it. He ended up in CORDS and got blown up by a mine and was heavily wounded.

SHIPPY: That class of the summer of 1969 was an infamous class. Jeff Davidow was in that class. But apparently they did have a mixture of people, some of whom had bought the party line and some of whom hadn't, and it caused a whole lot of dissension.

Q: You started your class when?

SHIPPY: In January of 1970.

Q: January of 1970. How would you characterize the class? What was the mixture?

SHIPPY: It was a good class. We were half USIA and half State, about 32 people, as I recall. Not any brilliant lights, there was no Tezi Schaffer or Jeff Davidow in the class, but we had some solid performers. John and Donna Hamilton were both in there. He is now Ambassador in Peru. She has been Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in Consular Affairs. Not too many minorities, and not too many women. I don't think it was exceptional in any way.

Q: Did you come in as a regular, regular is the wrong term. Did you come in to the Department of State or the USIA side?

SHIPPY: State.

Q: State side. As you did this were you coned at that time?

SHIPPY: No. Our class was the last one to come in unconed at that particular time. They told us that they would consult with us before they coned us. My first post was Guatemala, as a Consular Officer. I had been down there a good year, I think, if not longer. I had started asking the Department what was happening in terms of putting me in a cone, but I got no response. Inspectors came to post for an inspection, and informed me that I was Consular Cone; they were surprised I didn't know. As it turned out, the Department had put all the State women in the Consular Cone. I immediately started protesting, but didn't get anywhere. Then I was working on my next assignment. The Department offered me Europe, which was terrific, but in a Consular job, which I didn't want. I had gotten totally burned out on Consular work in Guatemala. I didn't want to do Consular work again. I ended up going back to the Department to work in the Office of Latin American Public Affairs. While I was there, I was getting absolutely nowhere in getting moved into the Political Cone. So I started law school at George Washington University at night to give myself an option. Then I moved into the officer of Mexican affairs as Assistant Pol-Econ Officer. From there I went to the African Bureau as Kenya-Tanzania Desk Officer. Somewhere in there I got changed to the Political Cone.

Q: Well let's go back to, your first assignment was to Guatemala. Did you feel a little bit that you were fated to be a Central American or...

SHIPPY: No. Quito, Ecuador was on the bid list that we got as junior officers, and that was my first choice. The answer came back that they really didn't want a woman, but the official rationale was that they wanted somebody immediately. I had not tested 3/3 in Spanish and needed to take some language courses to get up to a 3/3. Someone in our A-100 group had a 3/3 in Spanish, so that person got Ecuador and I got Guatemala. That was fine with me. Guatemala is a great place. I had traveled through it once. While in El Salvador, I had met my family in Mexico City and had traveled through Guatemala to get there, so I knew it was a beautiful country. So that was fine. Plus it gave me the opportunity to go back and visit my village in El Salvador.

Q: Well you were in Guatemala from 1970...

SHIPPY: ...to 1972.

Q: What were, you were a consular officer, was that it, or were you rotation?

SHIPPY: I was a Consular Officer, and I did about three months in the Political Section. Larry Pezzullo was head of the Political Section then. John Dreyfus was DCM, and Nathaniel Davis was ambassador.

Q: A very strong embassy at that time. People who went on to bigger and better things.

SHIPPY: The day I arrived in Guatemala was the day the German Ambassador's body was found. He had been kidnapped and killed.

Q: For what? Was it a...

SHIPPY: This was the guerillas, the anti-government guerillas using diplomats as pawns in the fight against the government.

Q: Was there very tight security around your office?

SHIPPY: There was security, nothing like there is these days, but there was security. The capital city was considered the most dangerous spot, so we had to ride in convoys to work. We were followed by Guatemalan police in a car. We always figured the greater danger was from the police. But the countryside was not a danger, so we were able to travel throughout the country on weekends. It was great! One day they cordoned off the city to do a house-to-house search for guerillas. The whole thing was totally bizarre. They blocked the streets going in and out of the city, but of course there were a million other ways to go in and out. The whole exercise was strange.

Q: What as you saw it in the 1970-1972 period, what was the government and economic situation in Guatemala?

SHIPPY: It was a dictatorial regime with the army playing an important role. Guatemala had a parliament or a legislature, but that wasn't too significant. The average Guatemalan was very poor. The Indians were often mistreated. The use of Indian labor in the coffee fields was not according to international labor standards. There was resentment. Americans were liked, but there was resentment of the U.S. for the U.S. involvement in the 1954 overthrow of Arbenz.

Q: Arbenz, yes which sort of resounded through decades. Were you aware, was the CIA messing around there very much?

SHIPPY: I would suspect they were, but I wasn't privy to a lot of what was going on. I got there shortly after Shawn Holly, our Labor Attach#, had been kidnapped. (He was released unharmed.) Guatemalans were being killed left and right. A friend and I were driving in the countryside one day, and the truck in front of us swung something over the side. Our

first guess was that it was a body. (It wasn't; it was a bag of cement.) Every morning the tabloid-sized newspaper would have a full page photograph of the latest body discovery.

Q: Was this sort of a violent society? I mean did the men take guns and so forth to work and that sort of thing?

SHIPPY: I don't think so.

Q: So these deaths were pretty much this was opposition to the government.

SHIPPY: Right. Crime was not a huge problem as I recall. I mean there were shoplifters, pickpockets and such, but crime as we know it today was not a big deal.

Q: What about what type of work, you were saying you were doing mainly consular work. What did that consist of?

SHIPPY: Interviewing way too many people per day and telling 70-80% of them no. They wanted visas to go to the United States. They wanted tourist visas, and they were going to work, so we had to tell them no, they couldn't have a visa. They were just trying to improve their circumstances and make some money to help support their family and get their kids some schooling. It was not a pleasant job.

Q: Where were they going? Was there any sort of focal point for Guatemalans?

SHIPPY: No, they were going pretty much all over the U.S. I remember once a guy was telling min January, that he was going to Chicago because it was such a great place to visit.

Q: About the same time a little earlier, I was in Yugoslavia, and I had cousins coming from Macedonia who had never been to Belgrade. They were all going to the Montreal Expo '67.

SHIPPY: Yes, you have got to wonder. In Karachi I wasn't doing Consular work, but there were an excessive number of “chicken farmer” applicants. We decided that one chicken farmer had gotten a visa, so everybody decided that was what one should be. The Vice Consul finally began asking questions about chicken farming, very basic ones, but the applicants couldn't answer them. Back to Guatemala: while I was in the political section, I was trying to show that I could do things besides Consular work, so I enrolled in an economics class at the University (in Spanish). I did a study group with the students. I don't remember what I learned about economics, but it was a great experience.

Q: Oh, yes. This was during the Nixon administration. Was there any concern with people you talked to about the plight of the workers? Somebody has got to do something here I mean rather than put down the growers, there is the other side doing something about the conditions that caused this.

SHIPPY: No, not much. Peace Corps Volunteers were there, and I had some good friends among them, but there was not much discussion of that. You didn't have the NGOs you do now that help raise consciousness. I did a tour of the Indian highlands with the head of the Maryknoll order in Guatemala. That was a very interesting trip. The Indians had pretty basic hardscrabble lives.

Q: Was there much Indian representation within the government and all?

SHIPPY: No. They were out of the political process.

Q: What were the Maryknolls doing?

SHIPPY: Economic development work.

Q: Much success?

SHIPPY: I think that for the most part each individual priest or group of priests were doing good things, schools or clinics or what have you. Of course some of the Maryknolls were alleged to have gotten into the political game. I didn't notice any of that on my trip.

Q: Was it revolutionary gallantry

SHIPPY: No. Well it might have been for those few that were doing it. I don't think I met them. That really came out in Brazil, that theory.

Q: Later the Maryknolls became part of the spearhead of the I won't say of the left, but I mean they were certainly running strongly in opposition to the establishment in some countries.

SHIPPY: Right. But I think that really happened after I had left Guatemala.

Q: Well, you were saying after two years of saying no to people, that was enough.

SHIPPY: Yes.

Q: Well the fact that you find that all the women were being put into consular things, I mean today of course, this would immediately, anything that would smack of this would raise the barrier of a suit or something like that. Did this occur to anyone at the time?

SHIPPY: No. Do you want to get into that now?

Q: Well maybe we could stop here. This might be a good place to stop. So I put at the end where we are saying you are just finishing up Guatemala which you left in 1972. I raised the subject that in 1972 you already found that all the women sort of in your group...

SHIPPY: All five of us with State.

Q: All were coned consular without any particular desire on your parts. It was obviously discriminatory, but so we want to discuss what remedies were available at that time, and let's talk about AFSA or I don't know, AFGE or any, you know, what organizations were going on and how you approached this or how you felt about this.

SHIPPY: Let me just add one thing. Back when we were talking about the Vietnam War: while I was in the Junior Officer Class in January of 1970 Foreign Service Officers signed a petition against the war. Congress wanted to know the names of those who had signed, and Secretary of State Rogers refused to give them the names. Several of us in the class at FSI at the time had signed. We were glad our new Foreign Service careers were being protected.

Q: The president got into this too. He wanted to get the names. Rogers and there was a great sort of conspiracy at the upper things to protect the officers from getting caught up in this which was quite successful.

SHIPPY: Yes, and I felt very good about State Department leadership.***

Q: Today is September 17, 2001. We ended up by saying that you found that all the women in your class were assigned to consular jobs when you came out. That is right isn't it?

SHIPPY: That's right. I should clarify though, all five of us with State were indeed assigned to the Consular Cone. I don't know if the others were consulted first. I can only speak for myself. I believe the others stayed in the consular cones and had successful careers, so I can only speak for myself and my dissatisfaction and disgruntlement.

Q: I think because these accounts are for people who may not understand the in's and out's. Could you explain why you were unhappy about sort of the women being coned consular, put in the consular specialty?

SHIPPY: Well, first I was upset because we had been told we would be consulted before a coning decision was made, and there was no consultation at all. Secondly I was upset because I tried to find out what was happening on the coning process, and I received no answer from anyone at the State Department. I learned that I had been coned only when the inspectors came down in the last part of my tour in Guatemala, and kind of said, “Oh yes, you are consular coned. Didn't anyone tell you?” I said, “No.” That is how I learned about it, which was very unsatisfactory. Finally, I was doing consular work in Guatemala and I didn't like it at all. We were interviewing probably 90% of our Non-Immigrant Visa applicants — and there were lots of them — and refusing about 80%. These were people who were just trying to better their lives and provide for their families. They were good, hard-working people and they saw their way to get ahead was by going to the United States and working, which meant they were not eligible for Non-Immigrant Visas. But I found it very hard to tell these basically very good people no for hours every day. So I did not like consular work and didn't want to stay in it.

Q: Also by this time you had been in the service for a couple of years. Did you see consular work as a way towards leadership positions in the Foreign Service?

SHIPPY: Not particularly. There was the impression that women were shunted aside into consular work. With some exceptions, even in consular work men tended to be in the more senior jobs.

Q: Well, I am a professional consular and you are absolutely right. In 1972 you left Guatemala. Where did you go? Oh one further question. At that time did you feel there was any recourse to this being put into the consular thing?

SHIPPY: I was told that if I wanted to do something about it, I would have to go back to Washington. Basically wait for home leave and when you are back in the Department, talk with people. Then there was a long negotiating process to get my next job. I was offered some jobs in Europe. One job I was offered, and I don't remember where it was, Poland

I think, Warsaw. It was presented to me as I would first do Consular work for awhile and then go into the Political Section. My CDO (Career Development Officer) called back later and said that in reality I would probably be doing Consular work the whole time, that the political job probably wouldn't actually happen. And I believe I was offered a Consular job in Germany. I turned all of those down. I did not want to do Consular work again. I was finally offered a job in the Office of Latin American Public Affairs (ARA/PAF), which I took.

Q: So you went where in 1972?

SHIPPY: I went to the Latin American Bureau in the Public Affairs Office.

Q: How long were you in that?

SHIPPY: Well over a year, but I don't remember, maybe two.

Q: Let's say 1972 to 1974 approximately.

SHIPPY: It was actually 1972 to 1973 some time, probably a year and a half or so.

Q: What did your job consist of in the ARA at that time.

SHIPPY: Hard to remember. Part of it was going through newspapers and cutting out articles of interest. That office produced press clippings for the Latin American Bureau. Preparing press guidance for the noon briefing; there were a lot of seizures of U.S. fishing boats by Latin American countries.

Q: Particularly Ecuador. Tuna wars.

SHIPPY: Yes. And Roz Ridgeway was on the Ecuador desk; that is where I had my first contact with her. She is very impressive!

Q: Somebody said that every time Roz Ridgeway tried to get ahead, they threw her back into fish because she was so good at that, but she had quite a career with fish over time. What was your impression of Roz Ridgeway?

SHIPPY: She was very good to work with. She didn't condescend to the Junior Officer. She treated you as an equal professional. She knew her subject cold. She was very good at putting words together to make a good statement or Q&A. Just very positive.

Q: When you were looking at newspapers were you looking at Latin American or were you looking at American newspapers?

SHIPPY: American.

Q: Other than sort of the tuna wars was there much interest did you find, or did you have to sort of look to see coverage of Latin America?

SHIPPY: Well, we were always able to put together a reasonable press clipping. My guess is we did it once a week. We didn't do it on a daily basis. I don't recall having trouble with a scarce or a sparse press clipping book.

Q: Well, did Cuba play much of a role?

SHIPPY: It played a role, but it was not a big issue at that point.

Q: Chile?

SHIPPY: 1972, yes.

Q: This was when Allende was coming in around that time wasn't it?

SHIPPY: Yes, and his demise as well.

Q: That must have you know, got everybody's attention didn't it?

SHIPPY: Yes. We had a USIA Officer as Director of the office, and a long time Civil Service Officer for the Deputy Director. Towny (Townsend) Friedman was in that office too. He and I shared an office and I worked with him.

Q: Sometimes you know, by giving press guidance you are directing foreign policy in a hurry. Did you find that this was the case?

SHIPPY: Not really. I mean there wasn't much attention to Latin America. Events in Chile, yes, but probably not as much as there is today.

Q: I suppose places like Central America and all were essentially off the map.

SHIPPY: That's right. The problems in El Salvador had started while I was still in Guatemala, so that was happening. Then of course Guatemala came later, but basically events in Central America were pretty insignificant.

Q: So you did this for about a year and a half or so. Did you feel that you were becoming part of the ARA team?

SHIPPY: Yes, once you were in ARA, you were in ARA. The expectation was that you would stay there. On the personal side, I had gotten fed up with the bureaucracy because it seemed likely I would have to stay in the Consular Cone. I decided I needed to do something to give myself an option, so I started law school at night at George Washington University. I started that when I was in ARA/PAF.

Q: That is a pretty hard grind, isn't it?

SHIPPY: Yes, it is. It was physically convenient because GW is close to the State Department. A good thing about working in ARA/PAF was that we were pretty much

through at 5:00. We didn't put in long hours. So I would walk up to GW and put in my two hours of class or whatever it was and finally wend my way home.

Q: How did that come out? Did you get your law degree?

SHIPPY: I got my law degree.

Q: How long did it take?

SHIPPY: It took three years. There were periods where I wasn't able to take classes. I took the DC Bar Exam in January of 1977, or February. January or February of 1977; it must have been February. I went to Zanzibar immediately thereafter. (I passed the D.C. Bar.)

Q: Well you were in the Department of State in Washington from 1972 until when, 1977?

SHIPPY: Right. Basically early 1977, so it was mid-1972 to the end of 1976.

Q: What were you doing after you left Public Affairs?

SHIPPY: I went to the Office of Mexican Affairs and was Assistant Political-Economic Officer. Phil Torrey (if I'm remembering his name correctly), who had been Consul General in Belize, was head of the office. I worked in that office with John Hamilton, and then with John Keene.

Q: I imagine Mexican affairs had quite a large contingent dealing with it. What part of the political-economic side did you have.

SHIPPY: I picked up the bits and pieces where I was needed. John Jova was Ambassador to Mexico at the time, and he was a reasonably demanding ambassador. I don't really remember any big issues that we worked on. I was in the office, I was in there maybe a year or so, not a long time.

Q: Well, then you left about 1974ish?

SHIPPY: Right. So then I went to, so I must have been there longer. In 1975 a job came open as Kenya and Tanzania desk officer. I had been bugging my CDO and learned about this job opening, bid on it and got that job.

Q: Was this a little bit out of line? I mean you were already well ensconced in ARA and all of a sudden you are off to a job in African Affairs in the Department.

SHIPPY: Well this was Secretary of State Kissinger's GLOP program. It appeared that if ARA got you, it had you forever. Although I liked Latin America, I didn't particularly want to do only Latin America. I joined the Foreign Service to see the world. So with Kissinger's GLOP program and this other opportunity I decided to try something else.

Q: There you were at the right time. Actually as I recall, GLOP was essentially aimed at Latin America. It encompassed the whole Foreign Service, but I think Kissinger had gone down on a trip or had a meeting of Chiefs of Mission of ARA and found they really almost didn't know what NATO was. He came out of there storming and said we have got to mix them up and get everybody out and around.

SHIPPY: That is certainly believable. Anyway, I took the opportunity to move to the African Bureau and became Desk Officer for Kenya and Tanzania in AF/E in the spring of 1975.

Q: So that would be through 1977.

SHIPPY: Not really, because I had Swahili language training for six months. Shortly after I came on the desk, four students (three Americans and one Dutch) were kidnapped from Jane Goodall's Chimpanzee Research Station in Tanzania by, coincidentally, the group that Kabila led at the time.

Q: Who is now the president of...

SHIPPY: Well, he was President of the Congo until he died.

Q: Now he is dead.

SHIPPY: Yes. So these four students were kidnapped, three American and one Dutch, and that was what I did for about five months. That was a period, for example, when I didn't go to law school.

Q: At the point when these four students were captured, kidnapped, what was our reading, what was this about? Was this simply money or was this political overtones or what?

SHIPPY: It had political overtones. They were asking for money, the kidnappers were asking for money, but it was Zaire rebels trying to make a splash. We thought, we went over all sorts of ideas about how to resolve the situation and never did come up with anything. There were various interesting little incidents that happened along the way.

Q: For example.

SHIPPY: For example, one time another young officer and I and lots of senior people went up to the Seventh Floor for a briefing, a special briefing, and afterwards somebody, and I can't remember who, came up to the other young officer and myself, and asked in a horrified tone, “Do you have “X” clearance?” “No, we didn't think we had it.” So we got an immediate briefing, and a back-dated clearance to resolve that issue.

Q: How was the student kidnapping resolved?

SHIPPY: One of the parents paid.

Q: What were we doing? Were we...

SHIPPY: We were trying negotiations and trying to get the Government of Tanzania to put pressure on them. Obviously the Government of Zaire couldn't do much with those rebels. It was not feasible to mount a military operation.

Q: You know the idea of paying is always a bit tricky. We have enough of cases of paying bribes in a country where somebody is up on trial and all where our official stand is absolutely no. But when we know in reality that this is probably the best way to resolve a problem if the demands aren't outrageous.

SHIPPY: I don't know the truth of the matter. Beverly Carter, an African-American USIA officer, was U.S. Ambassador in Tanzania at the time, and he was reported to have been present at the money exchange along with the parent who paid. Carter had apparently been in line, although I don't believe there had been an official nomination, but he was expected to be nominated Ambassador to Denmark. The word we had was that Kissinger had been so upset that Carter had been present at the money exchange that he was not nominated to be Ambassador to Denmark. He became Ambassador to Liberia next. I think Ambassador Carter did what he thought was right.

Q: What was our reading on Kabila at that time?

SHIPPY: There were various rebel groups around, and he led one of them. I don't know that he stood out because he had done the kidnapping. I don't know that Kabila himself got much publicity at that time. It was a fairly anonymous rebel group. Many years later, when it looked like Kabila was going to become President of the Congo (and he did), two or three of the students who had been kidnapped by his group had an article in “The Washington Post,” reminding people of his past actions. It didn't change anything, but I thought it was a good thing for them to have done.

Q: What was the government like in Kenya?

SHIPPY: President Kenyatta was still alive. We were doing the preparations if he were to die, and he didn't. He lived on several more years. Corruption was an issue.

Q: Did we see his daughter being a major player?

SHIPPY: Not at that time. I don't recall that she was particularly prominent, or at least we didn't talk about her. Nyerere was still president in Tanzania.

Q: Nyerere had mixed reviews. He was really the darling of sort of the socialist camp in Europe.

SHIPPY: And of many academics here in the U.S.

Q: Yes, and I was wondering were we at that point looking at what he had done to Tanzania and was doing to Tanzania and saying hey wait a minute?

SHIPPY: Nyerere was either hugely loved and admired or hugely criticized. The U.S. government at that time was leery of the benefits of everything he was trying to do. I don't know that we were as harshly critical as we were later.

Q: Did we see that eastern part of Africa as being a place where we could have, do we have interests there as say opposed to western Africa, the Franco and Anglophone countries there?

SHIPPY: I haven't worked in West Africa, but neither Tanzania nor Kenya have the kind of natural resources that West Africa has, oil, diamonds, gold, whatever. Kenya and Tanzania have mostly things like coffee and tea. Their political stability and their importance in the region make them of interest to the U.S., and are two of the reasons we have put significant amounts of USAID money into them.

Q: Did you find any sort of division, because Nyerere as you said, either you loved him or had very serious questions about him. Did you find that division ran within the African

bureau at all, or was the African bureau skeptical of him at that point?This is tape two, side one with Ellen Shippy. As you were saying.

SHIPPY: I was saying that Nyerere had great charisma and personal charms. Many people who met him personally were influenced by that.

Q: Yes. Well at some point you did have the feeling that, I have talked to people American ambassadors around used to get mad, annoyed because the area would get all this money, particularly from Norway, Sweden, you know, and it was essentially destroying the economies where they were trying to help get aid money to help their countries where they represented, and were not getting much because it was going to Nyerere, and his various schemes which you know even looking at it at the time was destroying what there was of the economy.

SHIPPY: Right. The two countries that I know about, Kenya and Tanzania, were both getting fair amounts of U.S. aid. Certainly the Scandinavians were putting huge amounts into Tanzania because they did think Nyerere was a good leader and had good ideas. The destruction of the economy was more clearly seen later. The damage to individual rights where he made villagers move into villages was of less importance to the Scandinavians, perhaps because of their own social structure, I don't know. In defense of Nyerere, in fact, it is easier to provide education and health if you have a populace living in smaller concentrated areas. Whether it would have been more successful if he had gone about it in a different way, I don't know. But since the villagers were forcibly moved into the villages, it didn't work.

Q: How about in Kenya? Kenyatta had gone from being the great enemy during the Mau Mau times to being considered the great democratic leader. Was there a halo around Kenyatta at that time or was that beginning to fade or had it faded?

SHIPPY: It was beginning to fade. The corruption was starting to color people's perceptions.

Q: How about in Kenya at that time, was tribalism as much of a problem as it certainly has been in so many of the western African countries?

SHIPPY: Tribalism was an issue because Kenyatta and the Kikuyu tribe were so dominant. There was a prominent Luo politician, Oginga Oginga, who was a competitor to Kenyatta. But the people who might have posed a threat to Kenyatta were taken care of one way or another. After Kenyatta died, several years after I had left the Desk, and Moi became president, it was thought that that was a good choice because he was from a small tribe and tribalism would become a lesser factor. It didn't turn out that way, though.

Q: Well then you spent this time in Africa; did you find Africa appealed to you more than Latin America?

SHIPPY: I enjoyed Africa, and I didn't want to do my next overseas tour in Latin America again. I was trying to get away from it a little bit, and I had a good offer from AF — Principal Officer at the American Consulate in Zanzibar — so I took it and went on from there.

Before we move on to other topics, let me talk about the Women's Class Discrimination Suit.

In 1975, a small group of women began meeting to discuss problems with the Department. Marguerite Cooper-King and Mary Lee Garrison are two of the names I remember. John Andereg, an AFGE representative (American Federation of Government Employees, a union), was part of the group. I don't remember who had the idea to start talking. I know I participated because of my unhappiness about the consular cone issue. After

many sessions, we slowly came to accept the idea that it might take a suit against the Department to effect change.

About the same time, Allison Palmer won her second suit against the Department for sex discrimination. She gave some (or all, I don't remember) of her monetary award to our group to fund our efforts. We hooked up with a law firm which specialized in such suits, and the process began in 1976. We were arguing that there was systemic sexual discrimination in the Department in many areas: the written test, conal designations, assignments, promotions, evaluations, awards, training. We were not using individual acts of discrimination, but saying that the system was flawed and discriminatory. We first brought a class action grievance against the Department. The Department threw it out on the basis that a class action grievance could not be brought; it had to be individual grievances. That went to court, which ruled that class action grievances were permissible.

So back to the Department, with our class action grievance. The Department threw it out that time on the basis that there were no grounds for the grievance. So back to court. The class was all female Foreign Service Officers, and some women who had not passed the Foreign Service Written Exam in specified years. Female FSOs who wanted to opt out of the suit were given the opportunity to do so. (I don't know how many did.) We had approached some senior female FSOs to ask them to join the suit in a prominent position, but none did. I certainly didn't hold that against thethey had more to lose than we did.

I left for Zanzibar while much of this preliminary work was going on, so I don't know the details. I do know that, while in Zanzibar, I received a Department notice that announced the class action suit, with a named plaintiff for each parand my name was on one of the actions. (I can't remember which one, perhaps the one on evaluations.) That was a bit of a surprise!

The only negative reaction I ever heard about with respect to my participation was a comment made by someone in personnel who, at a party a friend of mine was attending,

said when my name was mentioned that “Oh, Ellen Shippy is one of the enemy.” I never had any indication that retaliatory measures were taken against me. (They would have been illegal, of course.)

The court case dragged on and on. My impression was that the Department took an excessive amount of time, whether deliberately or just the usual bureaucracy working I don't know, to respond to requests for discovery, for example. Our case was built on statistical evidencfor example, X number of women took the Written Exam, and Y number of men did. But a smaller percentage of the women passed than did the men, when both groups had basically the same background. Our lawyers gathered the statistical evidence which, admittedly, took a great deal of time to collect, and then said it was evidence of sexual discrimination. The Department had to prove there was another reason for the discrepancies.

We eventually ran out of the money from Allison Palmer, so members of the Class Action Suit were asked to contribute something monthly to help pay the lawyers who were, as I understood it, charging only half of their usual pro-bono fees.

The case continued to drag on without going to court. In the meantime, the Department had made many changes that helped to improve the situation of women in the Department of State. For example, for a few years in the mid-1970's, one part of the annual Employment Evaluation Report (EER) was a page listing different characteristic. The Rater was supposed to mark a certain number of the Rated Employee's stronger characteristics, and a smaller number of their weaker ones. The Bureau of Legal Affairs (L) did a study of how these were marked, and discovered that male FSOs were given strong marks in “judgment,” “policy analysis,” “objectivity,” etc. Female FSOs were given strong marks in “organization,” “neatness,” etc. It was so blatant, albeit probably unconsciously so, that L not only said the Department couldn't continue to use it, but, as I understand it, said the Promotion Boards were to disregard it for the years it had been part of the EER form. I was

of the opinion that, even if we lost the suit, the situation in the Department was better for women because we had brought it.

Finally, in the early 1990's (remember, the process had begun in 1976!), the case was heard in court. I, and other female FSOs, testified, but the case really depended on the statistics. Our lawyers had professional statisticians testify. We lost the case, and the Department trumpeted its triumph in a cable to all posts.

Our lawyers, however, were confident that we would win on appeal. They were so convinced that they decided to not charge us for the work to bring the appeathey felt they had pretty much gotten what they could from female FSOs. They brought the appeal, and we won! And our lawyers were awarded their fees from the Department. (The Department printed a small notice to this effect somewhere inconspicuous.)

Several more years went by as remedies were discussed and implemented. The law firm split, and there was a discussion about which lawyer our case should go with. African American FSOs brought their own suit against the Department (the Thomas suit), but I don't know the details of that.

I am proud of having been a part of this lawsuit from the beginning, and believe the Department is a better institutiofor both men and womeas a result of it.

Q: Well in 1977 you went where then?

SHIPPY: In 1977 I went to Zanzibar as Principal Officer, following six months of studying Swahili.

Q: You were there from 1977 to when?

SHIPPY: From 1977 to 1979.

Q: What was Zanzibar, it was a Consulate General wasn't it?

SHIPPY: No, it was just a Consulate.

Q: What was Zanzibar like when you sent out there in 1977?

SHIPPY: They were just coming out of their socialism period. The people, I think, have always been very friendly to Americans, but the Government was becoming friendly to the United States and wanted more aid than we were giving them; we had good relations with the Government.

Q: How separate was Zanzibar from the rest of Tanzania at that time?

SHIPPY: Zanzibar had its own President and Council of Ministers. It had its own budget. It got its income from the sale of cloves, the spice. At that point the clove trees were suffering a disease, and there were studies going on to identify the disease and learn how to treat it. Zanzibar was starting to try other spices and tropical fruits to develop other exports, but cloves were still the main source of income. Many Zanzibaris thought the mainland was taking too much money from Zanzibar. There were mainland troops on the island. There was a branch of the Foreign Ministry on Zanzibar. Every state visitor who came to the mainland had to pay a visit to Zanzibar. Tourists coming to Zanzibar from mainland Tanzania had to go through customs and immigration again. Zanzibar had a dress code at that point very similar to Malawi's. Women's dresses had to come below the knees, and women couldn't wear pants in public, couldn't have a bare back or bare shoulders. Men couldn't wear long hair or bell bottoms, that sort of thing.

Q: Was this Muslim or was this kind of a local Zanzibar thing?

SHIPPY: It was a local Zanzibar thing.

Q: How did you find as a woman, was there any problem?

SHIPPY: No. I have always found that for the most part, if you are a diplomat and you act like you are a diplomat and expect to be treated as a diplomat, you are. The rules of society that pertain to women don't pertain to you because you are not a woman, you are a diplomat. You must also be culturally sensitive, of course, and, for example, not wear clothing that would offend local custom.

Q: I was interviewing Joan Plaisted, I don't know if you know Joan. She was saying she went to a trade delegation in Korea, and they were all invited to a Keising party, which is a Geisha party which traditionally is for men. They looked a little bit askance at her, and then they said, "Oh, you are Mr. Plaisted," so she went as Mr. Plaisted and had a Keising girl assigned to her. At that time how did you feel the writ of Nyerere in Zanzibar? Was it sort of a dual monarchy there?

SHIPPY: Yes, I mean in a crunch, Nyerere would have the final say. He had the army, but Zanzibaris did what they wanted to do with their money. The mainland didn't particularly dictate that.

Q: Were the Zanzibaris quite a different breed of cat than the mainland people?

SHIPPY: There is a coastal group, the Swahilis, who run from Kenya down through Tanzania.

Q: Through Mombasa and all that.

SHIPPY: Lamu and Mombasa, yes. The culture is similar, and the Zanzibaris are similar to that, but not particularly similar to people from inland Tanzania. Zanzibaris are Muslim, and the Arabic influence is great.

Q: Well now, not too long before you were there, there had been some rather nasty communal raids, hadn't there?

SHIPPY: That was the revolution.

Q: The revolution, okay.

SHIPPY: Zanzibar was a protectorate of Britain. In December 1963, Britain granted independence to Zanzibar and turned it over to the ruling class, which was Arabic. That goes back to the fact that the Sultan of Oman in the 1800s came down and took Zanzibar as part of his Sultanate. He relocated himself to Zanzibar. Then his two sons divided the Sultanate into Oman and Zanzibar, and there continued to be a Sultan in Zanzibar and an Arab government, which overlay the black African Zanzibaris. In December 1963, the British granted Zanzibar independence and turned it over to the Arabs. One month later the black Africans revolted and many Arabs fled to Oman. Some were killed. One of the “Mondo Cane” films (or perhaps it was “Africa Addio”) reportedly had scenes of Arab bodies lying on the Zanzibar beaches. That was January of 1964. The President of Zanzibar was Sheikh Karume; he had played a major part in the revolution against the Arabs. He invited the East Germans into Zanzibar to provide aid and assistance. They built some apartment blocks that were very East German, completely out of place in Zanzibar.

Q: Stalin alley type.

SHIPPY: Yes. Peace Corps came to Zanzibar after I had left. One of the Volunteers I met later told me that his apartment had been in one of those East German apartment blocks, which is wonderfully ironic. Anyway, Sheikh Karume was letting these people in, and Nyerere was worried because Zanzibar is only 24 miles from the mainland. In April 1964, he and Karume made the deal to unite Zanzibar and the mainland (Tanganyika) to form Tanzania. Karume at this point was apparently worried about the East Germans, and wanted control of them, so he gave up Zanzibar's independence for assistance with this. Karume was President of Zanzibar until he was assassinated in 1972.

Q: Did we have a tracking station there at that point or had that gone?

SHIPPY: No.

Q: We had one before hadn't we?

SHIPPY: Yes.

Q: Did we have any interests in Zanzibar at that time?

SHIPPY: No, except insofar as it was politically different from the mainland. There was probably some residual concern about Zanzibar because it retained its socialist attitudes for a long time.

Q: How about naval visits and all that?

SHIPPY: We didn't have any naval visits at all. It was enough a part of Tanzania that that wouldn't have sat well.

Q: What sort of things would you deal with the Zanzibari government about?

SHIPPY: Mostly economic development assistance. We had some corn projects. Heifer International sent in some heifers. Politics, keeping track of what was going on there. It wasn't a lot. Karume had been assassinated in 1972. There were stirrings about human rights issues, and rumblings from Zanzibaris who were unhappy with the union with the mainland.

Q: With human rights, this is sort of, the groundwork had been laid by Congress before, but this is the beginning of the Carter administration when you were there. Did that cause you, you know, we had all these human rights issues. Did you find any problem going in and making demarches or what have you?

SHIPPY: No, but I don't recall having to make any hugely heavy duty ones while I was there.

Q: On the economic side, you mentioned cloves and then heifers and corn and trying to do something. Was there a strong socialist overlay on Zanzibar at that time?

SHIPPY: No, the small farmers were doing what they wanted to do as were the fishermen. The first year I was there, however, the Zanzibar Government had imposed a sales price for fish, so despite Zanzibar being in the middle of the Indian ocean with lots of fish around, there were no fish for sale in Zanzibar. The government-imposed price was so low, the fishermen were sailing over to the mainland and selling on the beach over there, so we didn't have any. The government brought in vegetables about once a month for the market. They had a big ship called the Mapinduzi. I remember that one time the potatoes they bringing in were rotten so they dumped them all overboard, and we didn't have potatoes for a couple of months. There was a Vice Consul and myself at the Consulate. We would take turns going over to the weekly staff meeting in Dar es Salaam at the Embassy, and would bring back vegetables.

Q: Were there any other formal representatives there?

SHIPPY: It was probably the most mixed place I have been in terms of mingling. There were six consulates: the Russians, the mainland Chinese, the East Germans, the Indians, the Egyptians, and ourselves. No one community was large enough to sustain itself by itself, so we all mixed, except for the Chinese. People from all the Consulates played volleyball every Saturday at our guest house, and we mixed at receptions. The PLO and Frelimo (a Mozambique rebel group) had representatives on Zanzibar, but I didn't have any dealings with them.

Q: It is interesting because the countries you named basically were not the most friendly towards us.

Q: When I first got there, we didn't have relations with China. They didn't participate in anything. The Russians and the East Germans were very friendly, not a problem at all.

While I was there, we began the initial diplomatic relations with China, what did they call it, a diplomatic liaison office? Then official relations were established. After that happened, the Chinese Consul invited me to dinner. I had a wonderful Chinese meal, and watched one of their full-length propaganda films about a "red hero." Then I invited the Chinese Consul and his wife to my place for dinner, without a movie. As I said, every state visitor that went to the mainland had to come to Zanzibar and the Diplomatic Corps always trooped out to the airport to greet the visitors. A senior Chinese official came to Zanzibar after relations had been established. He made a big point of saying, "Oh, you are the American Consul. I am very pleased to meet you, etc., etc."

Fidel Castro came to Zanzibar once while I was there. I did not go to the airport, nor to the State Banquet held for him.

Q: It was kind of fun wasn't it?

SHIPPY: Yes.

Q: Were there just looking at this, any issues that particularly engaged on the foreign affairs field? Of course in a way they really weren't concerned with foreign affairs were they?

SHIPPY: That's right. Well one foreign affairs issue was at that point we were still getting the USIS movies every so often, and I would do a showing at my residence. On one occasion we got the movie "The Russians Are Coming" about the Russian submarine captain who loses his way and ends up in New York. I sent out invitations to a showing of the movie. The Russian Consul General complained to the Foreign Ministry Representative on Zanzibar that this was terrible. He asked that the showing be cancelled. The Foreign Ministry Representative called me to tell me about the call, but didn't ask me to cancel the showing. We went ahead and showed the movie. The Russian Consul General didn't come, but the Tanzanian Foreign Ministry Representative did.

Q: Actually it was sort of even handed at the Soviets and at the Americans.

SHIPPY: Not foreign policy, but another incident was when we had the “Wizard of Oz,” which I have always enjoyed. It happened that there was a cholera epidemic going on around the island, and you couldn't have groups of, I think, more than six. I showed that movie so many times to small groups that I got quite tired of it.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

SHIPPY: Jim Spain.

Q: Did he come over much?

SHIPPY: He must have come over a couple of times, but not very often.

Q: How was Zanzibar seen? Was it sort of a more cosmopolitan place than Dar es Salaam or something? Were there beaches or things that people did?

SHIPPY: No, at that time it was very anti-tourism. There was one good hotel in town, the Bawani, and a couple of inexpensive hotels. There is a lot going on there now, but there wasn't then. The government had not made up its mind that tourism was the way to use the resources of the island. If men or women came in shorts, the women had to put on skirts; the Zanzibaris would supply a skirt. The men had to put on long pants. They were not allowed to wander around in shorts. There were some private shops, but there were also state shops. I remember going into one, and the shelves were all bare except for a pile of clocks on one shelf. I asked where they were from. The storekeeper said they were from China. I thought it might be fun to have a Chinese clock and said I'd buy one. He said, “Don't bother. They don't work.”

Q: Was there any contact at that time between Zanzibar and the Arabian Peninsula at all?

SHIPPY: I believe dhows still traversed the way carrying goods.

Q: Well there was that famous trade, I mean when the winds went one way at one time and the dhows would go from Zanzibar and I guess maybe they would touch what is now Pakistan or something and come to India and then come back. It depended on the season of the winds.

SHIPPY: That's right. It wasn't hugely significant, but there was still some of that going on. You didn't see many Arab looking people around. There was a large Indian community, a large community of Zanzibaris whose parents came from Goa.

Q: Well did you have any sense of history; you were in one of our oldest consular posts, 1828 or 1832 something like that.

SHIPPY: I think we were the second oldest African post. Yes, there was a sense of history. It was great to be there. My footnote in history is that I was the last American Consul on Zanzibar.

Q: What happened?

SHIPPY: We closed it. Budget.

Q: It was money huh?

SHIPPY: Yes.

Q: It went back to 1832?

SHIPPY: 1832 is the number I recall.

Q: I think that is when we had that treaty that Jackson administration, Andrew Jackson.

SHIPPY: Zanzibar was a funny mix. It had the first elevator in East Africa, in the Sultan's palace. They held Pan-African games there and 3-M put in a state-of-the-art track the year before I got there. They had the first color television broadcast station in East Africa at a time when the mainland didn't have television at all. Of course programming was another matter, from the Jacques Cousteau series to interminable sessions of the Tanzanian political party's meetings. Yes. Zanzibar was an interesting mix. Before, the U.S. had always had open either the Consulate in Zanzibar or the Consulate in Mombasa. When Zanzibar closed, Mombasa was still operating; now they are both closed. The Swahili word for gingham cloth is marikani, from the Salem traders who brought it to Zanzibar in the old shipping days.

Q: My goodness. I did a book on the American consul and picked up things about Zanzibar and the Salem trade. This is probably a good place to stop. So in '79 we will put at the end, whither?

SHIPPY: For one of the few times in my life, I got the first position on my bid list, Lisbon.

Q: Lisbon. All right we will pick up your going to Lisbon in 1979. We haven't asked why you wanted to put it first on your list and all that, and we will talk about Lisbon next time.

SHIPPY: Great, sounds good.

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Q: Today is January 11, 2002. Ellen, why Lisbon?

SHIPPY: I really don't actually remember, but I think it was because I wanted to go to Europe, but I wanted to go to a European country with a reasonable climate. I would have loved to have gone to Great Britain, but those jobs are always very highly bid, so that was probably why I decided Lisbon was a better possibility.

Q: Well I think you will probably find Lisbon more fun that Great Britain or London, because it is so mellow there and all. You were in Lisbon from what?

SHIPPY: 1979 to 1982. I was the Deputy in the Political Section. Dick Bloomfield was ambassador. Ed Rowell was DCM and a guy named Datus Proper was the head of the Political Section. I “replaced” Wes Egan and Joe Sullivan. (The Section lost a position as they left and I arrived.)

Q: Well, when you got to Lisbon, what was the situation there? I mean this is after the real tensions of the mid-1970s and all that. What was the situation in Portugal at the time?

SHIPPY: They were consolidating their democracy. It was before they joined the EU. As I recall it was reasonably straightforward. I was covering the Socialist Party which was out of government at the time.

Q: Is this Soares?

SHIPPY: Mario Soares, yes, was leader of the party. Ramalho Eanes was President. Francisco Sa Carneiro was Prime Minister. I was there when he was killed in a plane crash; that was toward the end of my tour. They had elections at least twice while I was there. We went out and about around the countryside talking to political candidates, watching political rallies and so forth. The Communists were still active. I covered the communists as well as the Socialists, and met Alvaro Cunhal, the head of the party. I covered it just like a Political Officer covered any political party.

Q: Right when you arrived in 1979, we had this problem in Iran where the Islamic fundamentalists entered. Many had taken over the embassy; we had hostages and all that. Did particularly the Azores and moving military and all that, was that an issue at all when you were there, particularly at the beginning?

SHIPPY: What kind...

Q: I was just wondering, sometimes, you know, we need the Azores. I don't think there was any great movement of military equipment, but there was some going to the middle east. How did Portugal stand on the hostage business?

SHIPPY: I don't remember any issue about moving material through the Azores with respect to Iran.

Q: How about where stood the perennial Azores negotiations?

SHIPPY: Yes, we were entering the pre-negotiation stage, and did a lot of preparatory work on that. There was posturing on both sides. About a year before I left, we got a Pol-Mil position established and filled. I had been doing the Pol-Mil work, but with my other responsibilities, it was too much. And with base negotiations approaching, we needed an officer dedicated to Pol-Mil work.

Q: Well, you look at the Azores negotiations, going through their umpteenth generation right now, and I mean it is all about money isn't it essentially? I mean how much we will pay.

SHIPPY: Yes, and the benefits Portugal would get.

Q: So you say and I understand the great preparations, but I would think everything would have been prepared before. I mean just go into your pre-negotiation scenario.

SHIPPY: It is new people every time, and the new people have to go through the process. My favorite story about the Azores is in the Falklands War Britain used the Azores. Their usage was based on a treaty that went back to the 1400s.

Q: How did you find the Portuguese attitude in the military towards the United States at this point? I mean these young officers had come in I think 1974, something like that.

SHIPPY: Right.

Q: And there had been a pretty tense time.

SHIPPY: Relations were good. They wanted the U.S. training they could get through IMET. While there may have been individual soldiers or officers who weren't that keen about U.S.-Portuguese relations, it was not a huge problem.

Q: In Portugal at that time, was there any difference between say northern Portugal and southern Portugal? Were they having to divvy up that way into the political spectrum or...

SHIPPY: Southern Portugal was considered the communist area; northern Portugal the more conservative area. Much of northern Portugal was fairly isolated and fairly poor, and wanted more government intervention. The southern beaches of Portugal were beginning to get tourism, nothing like Spain, but something was beginning to happen. Then you had the large farming plantations in southern Portugal. I don't remember regionalism being an issue like it had been in some other countries I have served in.

Q: What about the communists? I know you weren't specifically covering the communists, but they had been led, which is probably to their detriment, by some hard line Stalinists with the 1974 revolution. People actually came out of the Soviet Union; they just worked with them. By this time had they changed? Had they become more Euro-communists?

SHIPPY: I did cover the Communist Party, as well as the Socialists. The Communist Party leader, Alvaro Cunhal, was still hard core. But some of the members were evolving towards being Euro-communists.

Q: Because this was the time of was it Berlinguer in Italy and other places. In fact there was concern that the Euro-communists would put on such a sort of friendly face that they might get snuck into power.SHIPPY: Right.

Q: How about the Socialists? Were the Socialists, were their ties pretty strongly to the Socialist movement in particularly Scandinavia, Germany, France and England?

SHIPPY: Yes, the Worldwide Socialist Union; the Portuguese were very strong players in that, and so, yes, the ties to the other European socialist parties were strong. There was a lot of exchange. And there were also ties to socialist countries and socialist parties in developing countries. One that caused some problems for us was their ties to the Salvadoran FMLN, which was tied to a major guerrilla group in El Salvador. So, yes, it was important just as the conservative party's ties to the conservative Christian Democrats were important.

Q: Where did we fit in in this particular equation?

SHIPPY: We didn't fit in because we didn't give money to political parties, or at least at that point we didn't. We didn't have NDI and IRI and all those organizations. What they wanted was tangible assistance.

Q: So getting together and linking hands and singing songs didn't have much appeal.

SHIPPY: No. The Embassy had no problem with access and visitors had no problem with access. It's just that they wanted things that the U.S. wasn't able to provide.

Q: As a political officer what was your impression of the Portuguese media?

SHIPPY: Hmm. Somewhere between developing countries and western European countries like Germany and England, a ways to go to develop a fully professional objective media. There were party newspapers, but...

Q: So one newspaper would be one party and one paper...

SHIPPY: Well, one newspaper was the government newspaper and one was the socialist.

Q: So you had to take them all and then balance.

SHIPPY: Yes.

Q: You were there the election of Ronald Reagan came about while you were there. Did that, how was that seen? I mean you were there at the beginning.

SHIPPY: The conservatives obviously were happy. The socialists, I don't recall any huge expressions of opinion. I don't know that it had that much internal effect on Portugal. Certainly the Portuguese didn't develop the relationship that Reagan and Thatcher developed.

Q: Well I take it, and correct me if I am wrong, Portugal on American foreign policy was not of much consideration in what was going on in Washington.

SHIPPY: No, Portugal, the Azores were important, and obviously we didn't want to see a communist victory in their elections.

Q: But that was pretty much it, except of course, you did have the Portuguese in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Jersey and some other states. Did they cause much of, were they...

SHIPPY: No, consular issues to some extent, but they were not a pressure group like the Irish.

Q: What about from your observation how were things going between the Portuguese and the Spanish?

SHIPPY: Reasonably well. I don't recall open hostilities. It seems to me there was some issue between them that they were dealing with.

Q: So we didn't back ourselves in any position to try to act as a mediator.

SHIPPY: No.

Q: Well it sounds like you were fortunate to be there at a tranquil time. How did you find dealing with the Portuguese government?

SHIPPY: I had good relations with the people I dealt with, had good relations with the Foreign Ministry. The people I dealt with for the most part were professionals interested in doing a good job.

Q: Did the Soviets have much influence then?

SHIPPY: No. Presumably they were working with the Communist Party. They certainly didn't have any influence with the government. Oh, I take that back. They may have had some influence with the government because of their revolutionary ties, but it didn't seem to be a big issue.

Q: I was just wondering during the time were there any sort of issues that arose, maybe on obscure things between our two governments, a tempest in a teapot?

SHIPPY: No, I don't recollect anything.

Q: What about Angola, Mozambique and all. Did these, was there any residue from the former...

SHIPPY: Portugal was still dealing with all of the people who had returned, the Portuguese who had returned from Angola and Mozambique. There were still issues of housing, employment and education for these people. When we had U.S. officials coming out from Washington to go to either Angola or Mozambique, they would generally come through Portugal and talk to Portuguese officials, and then go on to the other country.

Q: Did you ever get down to Angola or Mozambique?

SHIPPY: No, I didn't.

Q: Well it sounds like an almost ideal time to be there. Of course I say ideal, but in our profession what you really want is a nice revolution or civil war or something like that to sort of get the adrenalin running. What happened in 1982?

SHIPPY: In 1982 I decided it was time to return to the United States, and I wanted to do something different, so I applied for the Pearson Program. I ended up in Seattle working in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, which is attached to the Mayor's Office there.

Q: This was 1982 to 1983.

SHIPPY: No, I did a year and a half there.

Q:1982 to 1984.

SHIPPY: Yes.

Q: Tell me about what you did there. What were your impressions?

SHIPPY: I had a great time. I think it is a very valuable program. The object of Senator Pearson was to expose Foreign Service officers to the United States outside of Washington, and to expose Americans to the Foreign Service. I think it works. At that time there were more positions available than there are now. I don't know why things have changed. The office I worked in was Intergovernmental Relations for the City of Seattle. We dealt with relations with other cities, with the regional authorities, with state authorities, with federal authorities. Seattle's sister city program was run out of that office. My two main issues were international trade and tourism promotion. And I worked sister cities; Seattle is a very international city.

Q: You were saying you wanted a non-international issue, so you picked up sewage treatment.

SHIPPY: Yes, sewage treatment. I represented the city in a group that was trying to figure out how to get another sewage treatment plant. Seattle has very active citizens, and they are really into the “not in my backyard” stance, so it was a very difficult issue. But it was interesting, and I am glad I did it.

Q: How does one resolve these things? Is it trying to catch people when they are asleep to pull it through or to pick on the poorest and weakest neighborhood?

SHIPPY: No. Seattle has poor neighborhoods, but even those neighborhoods can get very organized and very vocal. I think we ended up with a site that was pretty remote from any habitation. Of course, not of course, but the treatment was such that there would be no smells; there would be no unsightly anythings there. It was still difficult to get it placed. We did find a place. One of the other issues was use of one of the byproducts — a sludge, very nutritious for plants. Weyerhaeuser had agreed to do a pilot project using this sludge for fertilizing some of their forest areas. That was another big issue. I believe the project was finally approved. Another woman in the office was working on bus issues. They needed a new station to garage buses overnight. It was extremely difficult to find any neighborhood that would accept that. Anyway, interesting. Local government is really face to face with the citizenry, much more than we in the State Department are used to being.

Q: Well did you find in a way dealing with other governments is not terribly confrontational. You sort of dance around.

SHIPPY: No, it is reasonably, things can get fairly nasty. The view of much of Washington State...

Q: Excuse me, I am talking about dealing with foreign governments.

SHIPPY: Oh right. Yes, that is right; it is not as confrontational.

Q: Not as confrontational, but as we say more in your face.

SHIPPY: That's right.

Q: So does it make you a tougher person?

SHIPPY: I don't know about that, but it certainly gave me a much greater appreciation for local officials, people who are willing to do that. One of the other interesting things I did was when Queen Elizabeth came to visit. She visited Seattle, traveling on her yacht. I was the City's representative on the committee that organized the visit; that was very interesting. My favorite comment came after the visit, which had gone very well, and she had enjoyed herself. There was a letter to the editor complaining because the school children hadn't been let out of school so they could line the streets on her route, on the basis that had things gone the other way, we would be her subjects. As she was departing, everyone who had worked on her visit lined up down the dock to her yacht, as if we were in a receiving line. She went down the line and shook everyone's hand. So I've shaken hands with Queen Elizabeth, and she thanked me personally, as she did with everyone.

Q: Did they find you sort of an exotic creature there at the beginning or did they treat you as another worker?

SHIPPY: Yes, I quickly became an integral part of the office. That was not a problem at all. They had had Foreign Service Officers there before me. David Shinn was there before I was, in the same office, so that was not new. Every so often they would remind me that I was using too many State Department acronyms and to speak English, but for the most part it was not a problem.

Q: What was your impression at that time of the politics of Seattle?

SHIPPY: Seattle had a really good mayor at the time, Charlie Royer. He had been a television news announcer. I think Seattle basically has good government. It is not corrupt, although there may be incidents here and there. They tried to identify and meet the needs of the citizens. They take into consideration environmental concerns. As I said, they are very internationally minded; a lot of their economy depends on international trade. I think it is a really good city.

Q: Did you get involved with this dispute, and I am not sure it was going on at that time, between the Japanese picking up American timber and using Seattle as a port for doing it. You know there were claims the Japanese were denuding our forests.

SHIPPY: We were shipping timber out to Japan, but it was not an issue in Seattle.

Q: Did you begin to see the government back in Washington as being the problem, thinking of is it them?

SHIPPY: No, although federal regulations sometimes drove the city people up the wall. It was things like block grants and mental health funds and that sort of thing where the regulations or the requirements were so detailed or so arcane that they did create problems. But for the most part the people I worked with looked at the federal government as a source of funds, and the object was how to meet the requirements to get the funds.

Q: You mentioned the sister cities program. Could you explain what that was and what was in it for Seattle?

SHIPPY: A group of private citizens would get together and decide that Seattle should have a sister city in X foreign city. We had Chongqing in China; we had Tashkent, Uzbekistan; Mazatlan in Mexico; Mombasa in Kenya, Taipei, Taiwan; Beer Sheva, Israel; Bergen, Norway; Christchurch, New Zealand; Kobe, Japan; Limbe, Cameroon; Nantes, France. Private citizens would organize events and fund them. The city did not provide funds. The city provided a formal approval to the relationship. If the city didn't approve it,

it couldn't be an official sister city. When citizens of the other city would come visit, the mayor would be involved in the events and so forth. It helped trade. It exposed Seattle to some people who might not have thought of it otherwise, so there was the trade aspect. Tourism was another one, obviously goodwill.

Q: What about did you run across the consular establishment, the foreign consular establishment in Seattle?

SHIPPY: Yes, not very much though. I was kind of surprised, but I didn't make a special effort to meet them. I think I ran into a few of them at various receptions around town.

Q: Were there any particular groups that were particularly strong, I am thinking of ethnic groups and all, in Seattle at the time?

SHIPPY: Yes, Seattle has a very large Asian population, Filipinos, people from China, Taiwan, from Japan, from Korea. There was some sort of an immigration issue involving Filipinos, but that happened after I had left. The Asian population is a very important one in Seattle. Many significant businessmen and women are of Asian descent, and they are involved in politics. The current governor of Washington State is of Asian origin. When I was there, there were Asian Americans on both the City Council and the County Council. African Americans are significant, and Latinos are becoming more significant. Seattle is composed of neighborhoods, and many of them are ethnic neighborhoods. The Scandinavians are a big ethnic group in Seattle, the Germans, Britons.

Q: Tourists, what are the big attractions. Where do tourists go?

SHIPPY: The city, shopping, Pike Place Market, the surrounding countryside, boating, skiing, tulip fields in the spring, the ferries and the Olympic peninsula, which has a large temperate rain forest.

Q: Something like that, I know went there. I was astounded.

SHIPPY: Mount Rainier, there are just all sorts of things. You go east and you get into the mountains and there is a little German town, and you go further east and you are out on the plains, so there is lots to do.

Q: Did you have any feel about the division? It seems the State of Washington is divided between the coastal area which is quite liberal and then you go over the mountain range and all of a sudden you are into the Midwest farming practice.

SHIPPY: That's right. It is very conservative. It is like other states. People resent Seattle's power and influence. That always affects issues that are played out in the state legislature and with state agencies.

Q: Well in 1984 you had to come back to the real world. What did you do?

SHIPPY: I came back to the Operations Center in the Department and was Senior Watch Officer for a year.

Q: This was 1984...

SHIPPY: 1984-1985.

Q: 1984-1985. This is high Reagan period wasn't it?

SHIPPY: Actually I must have come back, I came back from Lisbon in 1982, and I was in Seattle 1982-1984, so it was the spring of 1984 when I went back and became Senior Watch Officer.

Q: This was sort of the height of the Reagan period was well in. There were a couple of things going on you know. I am not sure during that 1984-1985 period. What were some of the issues literally on your watch?

SHIPPY: There was an incident with a U.S. ship drifting towards Cuba that was an issue. We didn't have any of the big events on my watch.

Q: The bombing of Libya and that sort of thing.

SHIPPY: Yes, none of that. It was kind of your normal everyday little incidents that happen around the world that have to be dealt with.

Q: Do you think of any that happen to be complicated or sort of interesting that you were dealing with in that time?

SHIPPY: Actually I can't; I don't recall. We just did our job.

Q: I am sure you did. Later as you are going through this, if you think of anything you can insert it you know when it comes back. I am told that a stint...

SHIPPY: I have a funny story.

Q: Okay, let's hear a funny story.

SHIPPY: At our consoles we had drop lines to the Secretary's house. That means you pick up the phone and it rings in his house, or he picks up his phone and it rings on our consoles. So that line rang, and one of the officers on duty picked up the phone and a voice said, “This is George; please get me so and so.” The person, who had obviously not been focusing said, “George who?” The Secretary said “George Schultz, could I please speak to....” Luckily the Secretary had a pretty good sense of humor; he didn't seem to be too offended.

Q: One of the advantages to a professional Foreign Service officer is that being in the Ops Center you can understand who does what to whom and kind of how the system works. Did you come away with a better understanding of the system?

SHIPPY: Yes, I think so. Yes, who is really making decisions and who feeds information, and who feeds information better than others.

Q: Well then you have sort of drifted around to different places. Were you beginning to feel that you belonged anywhere, that you had a home bureau or did anyone love you at all within the system? That is one of the problems of getting these interesting assignments.

SHIPPY: Yes. No, I didn't feel like I had a home bureau, but it didn't bother me hugely. I joined the Foreign Service to see the world, and I deliberately didn't want to be stuck in any one bureau. So as long as I could keep getting assignments, I was okay.

Q: Well, in 1984, whither?

SHIPPY: Let's see, I did the Ops Center for a year, and then I went on to the Line as Deputy Director for about a year. Michele Bova was Director

Q: Does this take you up to about 1985 or 1986?

SHIPPY: To 1986.

Q: This is still really within the secretariat.

SHIPPY: That's right. While I was on the Line, so I would know what the officers were going through, I did a couple of advances with the Secretary's team, which is one part of what the Line does.

Q: Did you go on any trips?

SHIPPY: Yes, I went to London and Brussels. That was fun. It is very hard work, long hours, but it is fun. You are in the center of things. So then I was looking around for a job because that was a one year assignment. Joe Melrose recruited me to go out to Dhaka,

Bangladesh to be the Political Counselor. Howard Schaffer was Ambassador, and John Brims was his DCM. So that is where I went.

Q: This is Bangladesh. Wow, you are moving around. Well you are becoming an Indian Ocean expert.

SHIPPY: That is right, yes.

Q: You went to Bangladesh from...

SHIPPY: 1986 to 1988.

Q: 1986 to 1988. What was the reputation of Bangladesh at that time because I have heard various accounts. Some think it was awful and others, oh, boy, this is a lot of fun, a great place.

SHIPPY: It doesn't have a good reputation. That is why Joe was beating the bushes to find somebody who was willing to go there. But those who went generally had a very good tour. It's one of those sleeper posts. It is very good for families. There is a great American club there with a restaurant, tennis courts and swimming pool. The Bangladeshis are very nice people, very warm hearted and hospitable. Not everyone assigned there sees that aspect because if you go shopping, for example, clusters of kids will form around you and touch your arm and feel your hair and so forth. But getting to know them on an individual basis, I found them the most hospitable people I had come into contact with since the Salvadoran campesinos I worked with as a Peace Corps Volunteer. In many countries, you don't get invited to people's homes because they can't match you. They can't match your house in size or amenities. They can't provide the liquor or food or whatever. Bangladeshis, it doesn't matter to them. They would invite you, and if you didn't want to come, you didn't go, and if you went you had a great time in very poor surroundings. I had a friend who was a university professor. He had an apartment on probably the third or fourth floor of a building. There may have been an elevator, but it

never worked, so you walked up the stairs in a concrete apartment building. The electricity was generally working, but there was no air conditioning. This is Bangladesh where it is generally very hot. Mosquitoes are a problem and so forth, but his family was welcoming. Bangladeshis make wonderful food. So it is a great place in that aspect.

Q: During this 1986 to 1988 period, what was the government of Bangladesh like at the time?

SHIPPY: A former military officer was president, Hussain Muhammad Ershad. I've been in two countries with former military men as President: Eanes in Portugal and Ershad in Bangladesh. We were pushing for elections in Bangladesh. Opposition parties operated there. The Bangladesh National Party was led by Begum Zia, who was the widow of a former president who had been assassinated. She believed that Ershad had a part in her husband's death. Then there was the Awami League run by Sheikh Hasina, who was the daughter of one of the early leaders of the country. Begum Zia's husband had a role in his assassination.

Q: Sounds like quite a group there.

SHIPPY: The best story is that the National Democratic Institute had a dinner in San Francisco for women leaders. Some woman, I think an American, was seated, and there was someone on her right and someone on her left. The American begins to make conversation and introduce herself. She turns to one of them and says, “I am so and so, who are you?” The woman says, “I am Sheikh Hasina. The woman on your left, her husband assassinated my father.” After that what do you say? Anyway, Bangladesh is an interesting country, and now Begum Zia and Sheikh Hasina are taking turns governing the country as Prime Minister. Ershad resigned as president in December 1990. He was convicted and imprisoned for illegal possession of firearms and for corruption, and spent six years in prison. The youth wings of the political parties were used as the shock troops, and there was a fair amount of violence. They used sticks, stones and chains, not guns,

so the death toll was not great. There were injuries, but not death. (As opposed to Karachi, where the party youth groups used Kalashnikovs.) The Bangladesh Parliament Building is one of the most impressive buildings I have seen. It is concrete and wood with geometric shapes; it's hard to describe it, but it is a great building. The architect was Louis Khan; he created a spectacular building.

Q: Well how did you find dealing with the body politic in Bangladesh?

SHIPPY: What do you mean?

Q: Well in other words you know, you talk to various leaders. Did they want anything from the United States or did we want anything from them?

SHIPPY: Oh, everyone always wants money from the United States. By this time we had NDI.

Q: NDI is what?

SHIPPY: National Democratic Institute. IRI is the International Republican Institute. Congress gives money to the National Endowment for Democracy, and then that organization passes money out to NDI, IRI, and the elections group. So there is some assistance. We can't give money to the political parties, but we can provide assistance in helping people learn how to campaign; we can train poll monitors and send observer teams. What we wanted from the Bangladeshis were elections, and free and fair elections. We got elections. One of the political officers came back from observing them, and said it was just amazing. At one polling station he visited, one of the polling officials was sitting in a room stamping the ballots one after the other. So, free and fair, we didn't get so much.

Q: Were there any other issues other than say UN votes or something that we had with Bangladesh?

SHIPPY: The main issues in Bangladesh are poverty, and social and economic development.

Q: You know, at our embassy, did we see any "the United States is far away and we are only one country," what do you do with a country of so many people, you know such little area for natural resources?

SHIPPY: You help them as best you can. You certainly don't write them off. Bangladeshis are very hard working. They have tremendous obstacles; they get flooded out, and they pick themselves up and get started again. If you are in development work, Bangladesh is "the" place to work. The different humanitarian agencies, USAID and the NGOs want to be there working.

Q: You know we have projects; other people have projects. Do these fold or do they keep going or do you just have to keep adding new ones or how does it work?

SHIPPY: Basically you keep going. I don't know what our global USAID program is now, and I don't remember what it was when I was there. It takes a long time to get these things started when the country doesn't have natural resources.

Q: You must have been there during one of the floods weren't you?

SHIPPY: I was, but not one of the worst ones. The streets in Dhaka flood fairly easily, and as soon as a street was flooded, somebody would get out a boat and start offering taxi service. Villages are often an extended family compound. After one bad flood, we visited one such village out in the countryside. One guy said he had sat in a tree for several days waiting for the water to recede. The women and children had gone to a school, which was the designated gathering point. When we were there, the water was beginning to recede, and they were making their plans about how they were going to replant, where they were going to get the seeds, and so forth. One of the problems, of course, was drinking water. Their well had been contaminated, and there was stuff floating on top of it. I asked what it

was. The village headman said, “Those are pages from the Koran which were put in there to purify the water.” In floods you have an increased number of snake bites. It turns out that in floods, snakes and people both go to the high ground. Bangladeshis are known for their ideas, for their drama, for their poetry, for their music, for their theater. My own theory is that these are things that aren't lost when the flood waters come, that they can be passed on.

Q: What about relations. I mean India sort of surrounds, a very peculiar manifestation there.

SHIPPY: Yes, but it doesn't completely surround it. Bangladesh has a small border with Myanmar, but India borders most of Bangladesh. Relations with India were not wonderful. There were various long-standing issues with India. One was a water issue about a dathe Farakka Barrage — in India that controls the flow of water in a major river in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi farmers need water from that river to grow crops during the dry season. So that was an issue. There were a few Bangladeshi settlements inside India across the border, not terribly far in, but still in. Bangladesh wanted guaranteed routes to these settlements. That issue has been resolved (after my time in Bangladesh). There was an island where the issue was whether it was Bangladeshi or Indian. The issues between Bangladesh and India are not armed conflict. It is nothing like relations between Pakistan and India.

Q: What about with Bengal? I mean there are Bengalis on both sides. How close were they. Was there by this time division between...

SHIPPY: There is a real division and a real border. While I was there, the Communist Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu, who was born in what is now Bangladesh, made a visit back to his home village and met with his old nanny. He was received with honors and a great deal was made of that whole visit.

Q: Was there any movement at all trying to bring Bangladesh into India?

SHIPPY: No.

Q: On either side?

SHIPPY: No, Bangladesh is a Moslem country.

Q: Ah, so that. Are Bengalis in Bengal...

SHIPPY: They are Hindu.

Q: Hindu, so that is the real. How about at that time was there any rise in fundamentalism?

SHIPPY: The Jamaat-i-Islami was a political party in Bangladesh with a minority following. That is the fundamentalist party. I met with the head of that party. Some things have happened since I left Bangladesh. There was a Bangladeshi woman who wrote a book about women's rights. A fatwa was issued against her. Women's issues are serious in Bangladesh. There are some instances of acid throwing and a few instances of wife burning; women are culturally, socially and legally very circumscribed. One time when we had official visitors from Washington to look at family planning, we went into a slum area of Dhaka and visited a family compound there. The woman in the compound, which was not very large, said she never left it. Her husband did the shopping and she stayed in the compound. While I was in Bangladesh, garment factories became a big export enterprise for Bangladesh. The owners of the garment factories decided to hire women because they could pay them less than they would have had to pay men. What happened as a result was that all of these women who had never had an income and probably didn't get out of their house very much, all of a sudden were walking to and from the factory twice a day, out on the street twice a day, and they had an income. I think the long term effect of that will be very significant.

Q: Did we have any sort of military interest in the area at all?

SHIPPY: We had a Defense Attache Office there. We had an IMET program. As we do everywhere, we want relations with the military of the country.

Q: Did the Indian ambassador play much role over there?

SHIPPY: Yes, and he was generally pretty well informed about what was happening.

Q: How about did Pakistan have any relations with them?

SHIPPY: Yes. Pakistan and Bangladesh had relations.

Q: Any particular problems or just...

SHIPPY: There is a big issue between Pakistan and Bangladesh, the Biharis. At the time of independence there was a large group of people who had originally come from Bihar, India, at the time of partition. They were Muslim, which is why they left India. They ended up in Bangladesh, but they really wanted to be in what was then West Pakistan. But when West and East Pakistan separated, had their war, and Bangladesh gained its independence, the Biharis were left stranded in Bangladesh, in refugee camps. The issue was how to get them over to what is now Pakistan. That is a major issue that was a problem when I was there, and I believe still is a problem.

Q: Is it money or was it unwillingness to leave?

SHIPPY: No. It is Pakistan's unwillingness to accept another large group of non-Pakistanis.

Q: Well then in 1988 you left there. Whither?

SHIPPY: Karachi, to be Deputy Principal Officer.

Q: Karachi by this time would be a Consul General?

SHIPPY: Right.

Q: A big one it must be.

SHIPPY: Yes.

Q: You were there from 1988 to...

SHIPPY: 1991.

Q: You were there during the Gulf War.

SHIPPY: Yes. We had “voluntary” departure, which was really “ordered” departure during the Gulf War.

Q: Well let's say prior to that what were our relations with Karachi?

SHIPPY: Outstanding. But Karachi is a violent place. If you needed a Kalashnikov to take care of a problem, it was said you could rent one for an hour or so. Guns were all over the place. I was talking about the student groups in Bangladesh and their fights. In Karachi they had the same kind of fights only in Karachi they had guns, so there was a death toll and injuries were more severe.

Q: Well how does this affect the western community?

SHIPPY: For the most part it didn't. The killing of the Americans, both private and U.S. government employees, happened after my tour.

Q: Some accountants I think weren't they? I can't remember.

SHIPPY: There were three oil company people killed, and in a separate incident, three people from the Consulate. We had guards and safe havens in our houses, but we didn't have to travel in convoy, we didn't have to have protection and we traveled around Karachi and the consular district as we wanted to.

Q: Well the example of the burning of Islamabad what was that, 1979?

SHIPPY: I believe so. We believed that is what made the department decide that non-essential personnel should leave at the time of the Gulf War before the fighting started in the Gulf.

Q: Well until just before the Gulf War what was the main sort of purpose of our job of our Consul General in Karachi?

SHIPPY: A lot of American services and visa services. We had a Pol-Econ Officer whom I supervised. Both Joe Melrose, the Consul General, and I did pol-econ reports. Trade was important. We had some American companies there. Citibank was there. Pakistan is a very large country, and people in Pakistan are their ethnic group first. They put their Muslim and ethnic group a long way before they are Pakistanis. The feeling of nationhood has yet to develop strongly, so there are a lot of political things going on that are of interest to the United States.

Q: How do we view the War, the attacks, were we threatened by the extreme fundamentalist groups? Were they the problem? Were they communists or were they something else?

SHIPPY: The religious fundamentalist groups, their role in the country was increased by President Zia ul-Haq who really got religion into politics. I arrived in Pakistan about a week after the plane went down with Zia ul-Haq and Ambassador Raphel on it. The fundamentalist parties were not winning elections, but they were important in the political life of the country, and they certainly influenced the debate and what was possible. In

Karachi, in addition to the government party, there were two primary political parties, Benazir Bhutto's Pakistani People's Party (PPP), and the MQM, a party of the Mohajirs (people who had come over from India at the time of partition). The MQM won local seats, and a few in the National Parliament, and was a significant political force. Much of the violence that occurred in Karachi was between the MQM and the PPP.

My own impression is that Benazir Bhutto was a great political leader in exile. She was less effective as an opposition leader; the concept of elected opposition to government and what the role of the opposition should be, etc. — they are still working out how to define that. Benazir was pretty good as an opposition leader in Pakistan, but she didn't govern as well as she opposed. She's charismatic. In English she is very articulate; her English is better than her Urdu. She is very appealing to a western audience. She is also appealing to many people in her own country, carrying the mantle of her father, a populist leader. But Pakistan just has not been fortunate in its choice of leaders. Neither Benazir nor Nawaz Sharif — for awhile they took turns being leader — neither one of them served their country very well.

Q: Did we get much review of India-Pakistani relations, I mean across the border in India? How were things going while you were there?

SHIPPY: We didn't see a lot. There weren't the border incidents like there have been on later occasions. We knew and talked with the Indian Consul General and his people. They were not particularly influential, but they were well-informed. Relations were really being handled in Islamabad.

Q: Was there much interest, you were there during part of the time I guess, the Iran Iraq war was over by the time you got there wasn't it?

SHIPPY: I think so.

Q: Was there much when Saddam Hussein did his thing in Kuwait, was there much focus on Karachi or the gulf and what was going on in the gulf?

SHIPPY: No and yes. A lot of Pakistanis and, especially, a lot of people from Sindh, which is the province Karachi is in, had been employed in the Gulf. The money they sent back was an important factor in the economy. A majority of them were booted out, possibly during the Iran-Iraq war. I don't remember the cause, but they were back in Pakistan. Not only was the money no longer coming in, but they were there and needing jobs or contributing to unemployment or under employment. So that was a factor. Baluchistan, which is the province next to Karachi, that is where Quetta is which has been in the news recently, is actually very close to the Gulf states, and there is trade back and forth across the Gulf.

Q: Straits of Hormuz I think.

SHIPPY: Yes, you're right. Baluchis traditionally formed the Sultan of Oman's army. Then you have a connection with Zanzibar because the Arab trade routes used to go down to Zanzibar from Oman. In the early 1800s the Sultan of Oman took over Zanzibar and placed the seat of his Sultanate in Zanzibar. So there is a connection between Zanzibar, Oman and Baluchistan. You see Zanzibari influences in Baluchistan.

Q: What was your reaction when Iraq invaded Kuwait? Did you see this as affecting you?

SHIPPY: Certainly we didn't think the Pakistanis were going to do anything to us. We reacted to it as an event happening to our colleagues.

Q: Did the Pakistanis, were they reacting any way to this?

SHIPPY: What I recall is, when it was talked about, they were against the invasion. They didn't support it; the people I knew and talked to didn't support it.

Q: Was there any thought as things began to develop, that Pakistani troops might be brought in?

SHIPPY: No. When and where?

Q: I mean to the allied forces.

SHIPPY: No. They didn't support the invasion, but as I recall they weren't willing to put troops to fight against it, although I may be misremembering here. I don't know apropos of what, but we had a port visit while I was there. (This was not during the Gulf War.) A U.S. aircraft carrier came to call.

Q: A big deal.

SHIPPY: Yes. Ambassador Oakley came down, and there was a “fly out” with the Ambassador, the Consul General and various senior Pakistani officials to the aircraft carrier. The aircraft carrier never docked; the water was not deep enough. There was concern about security, but we went forward with the port call.

Q: There was no particular problem about traveling around town.

SHIPPY: No.

Q: Were there places you didn't go?

SHIPPY: Just as there are places in DC I don't go.

Q: Yes, but were there distinct sort of areas of unrest?

SHIPPY: No. On certain occasions, for example, around Eid time when the Shias and the Sunnis were having their annual disputes, there would be areas that you wouldn't go, and you wouldn't go watch the Shia procession. But for the most part it was not an issue. When

I was there, Karachi had a population of about 11 million. It is not built up, it's built out, so Karachi is an immense physical area. For the most part, Americans didn't realize that, because you drove from the airport to the housing section to the downtown area. I would go out on my political meetings which might be in some remote area of the city, and I really did get a sense of the immensity of Karachi. We drove, we didn't drive all over the city, but I have been to a lot of the city with a driver, sometimes accompanied by the political FSN, and I never had fears. The people in the street were invariably nice and polite, friendly.

Q: Did the way we waged the war in the Gulf have any influence on how people looked toward you or not?

SHIPPY: The decision was made in Washington to have an authorized departure which they said was to be treated as if it were an ordered departure. We felt that it wasn't necessary. In fact, nothing happened. Our relations with the police were excellent. The thing about South Asia is that crowds, and even mobs, can coalesce rather quickly. I think there were maybe a few occasions where there were reports that a crowd or a mob was coming to present a petition or something, and the police set up barricades. No crowd ever got close to the Consulate while I was there.

Q: You left there when?

SHIPPY: The summer of 1991.

Q: This would probably be a good place to stop I think. Where did you go?

SHIPPY: Kampala. I was DCM. Johnnie Carson was ambassador.

Q: Okay, so we will pick this up in 1991 in Kampala.

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Today is March 8, 2002. You are off to Kampala, Uganda in 1991. Who was the ambassador again?

SHIPPY: Johnnie Carson.

Q: Johnnie Carson. You were there from 1991 until when?

SHIPPY: 1994.

Q: 1994. What was the situation in Kampala or in Uganda at that time?

SHIPPY: It was a very hopeful time for the country. Yoweri Museveni was the president. He was trying to open up the economy, bring in business, settle the longstanding issue with the Asian population to bring Asian investment back in.

Q: This was after they were all kicked out. Idi Amin kicked out so many particularly Indian and Chinese too.

SHIPPY: In East Africa “Asian” means “South Asian.” Yes, so that had been an ongoing issue. Museveni was trying to rectify it. In fact he did. Some Asian families came back and resettled in Uganda. Most did not. They had made lives elsewhere. Some of them did put new investment money into the country, so that was all good. HIV/AIDS was a major issue. Museveni from the beginning, the early days of the pandemic, had taken a very public stance against it; he was one of the more enlightened leaders.

Q: What could you do against this disease? I mean what was the government's position?

SHIPPY: A lot of it was education, just talking about it publicly which many countries didn't do, educating the most vulnerable groups, including teenagers. They were doing a great job there. One of the local newspapers once a month ran an insert directed towards

teenagers about sex, body functions, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. It was great.

Q: Were we taking any role in that?

SHIPPY: We had a major program there, funded through USAID. There was a woman detailed from CDC whose job was to work on HIV/AIDS issues with the Ugandans.

Q: That is the Communicable Disease Center in Atlanta.

SHIPPY: It is actually the Centers for Disease Control. A woman from CDC was in charge of the USAID efforts on HIV/AIDS. She did incredible work: publicity, prevention, education, promoting the use of condoms as a way to protect people. Also, a lot of research was going on in Uganda about transmission, mother-child transmission. At that point the whole issue of the cocktail had not really become...

Q: You had better explain what the cocktail was.

SHIPPY: The “cocktail” is a combination of three drugs that seems to inhibit the development of the disease. There are questions about at what stage you start doing it, how long it is done and so forth. It is very expensive, so there is a lot of discussion about that these days, but in 1991 to 1994, there wasn't much. The elite in Uganda would go to Europe for treatment, including the cocktail, but the majority of the people didn't have that option.

Q: Were you seeing a significant number of the population of Uganda either suffering from aids or at least were exposed to it as in some countries where the potential is horrendous?

SHIPPY: A significant percentage were HIV positive, but I don't remember the figures. There were regions of the country where a large part of the adult population of working years had died. There was one province on the truck route where there weren't many adults left. You had a situation where grandparents ended up taking care of the children,

their grandchildren. USAID had projects in this area, health and education projects. The army was heavily hit. You didn't, when you walked the streets of Kampala, you didn't necessarily notice sick and dying people. It wasn't quite like that. It was like a regular city, but there were a lot of people who were HIV positive, but hadn't developed symptoms, and others who had developed symptoms. The hospitals were completely overwhelmed.

Q: Well with something like AIDS, I would have thought that being assigned to Uganda, you and others would make you rather nervous because you get into an unforeseen accident and there is blood. You know you are never quite sure what will happen.

SHIPPY: The biggest health risk, or at least one of the biggest health risks in Uganda, was traffic accidents, not necessarily because of HIV/AIDS, but because, particularly if the accidents happened outside of Kampala, there was very little in the way of health facilities. Not much could be done for accident victims. I never worried about the dangers of traveling. It is just one of the things you do in your job. With respect to HIV/AIDS, certainly people had house staff, and you would take proper precautions, but tuberculosis was a greater issue vis-#-vis house staff.

Q: With Uganda, were we during this time, how were relations say with Kenya? Was this one of the things?

SHIPPY: Relations were tense. At one point Kenyan President Moi and Ugandan President Museveni met. That was considered a step forward, but relations were never good. Uganda believed that Kenya supported a rebel group which stayed in Kenya and made forays across the border. This group, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), later became more active and committed atrocities on Ugandan villagers, including stealing young boys to be soldiers in the LRA. But when I was there they made occasional forays in northern Uganda, and burnt schools or whatever, but weren't as bad as they became.

Q: How about, I am not sure. I have my Rwandas and Burundis mixed up, but which is the one that abuts on to Uganda?

SHIPPY: Rwanda.

Q: What was the situation between Rwanda and Uganda at that time?

SHIPPY: It was fine. There were soldiers in the Ugandan army that some people considered Rwandans, and some were Rwandans. It was a standard line of criticism, that Museveni used Rwandans in his army. Rwandan Tutsis who had fled Rwanda in an earlier time, had joined Museveni in the bush and had been part of his army as he took control of Uganda. Then, not too long after Museveni took control, there was a movement of the Tutsis back into Rwanda to fight the Hutu government there. Some of Museveni's senior army officials left the Ugandan Army and joined this rebel uprising in Rwanda. So there were issues there. The Rwandan government claimed the Ugandans were funneling arms to the Tutsis in Rwanda.

Q: Did we get involved in this relationship?

SHIPPY: No.

Q: What were we doing, just reporting what the charges and countercharges were?

SHIPPY: Yes, and we met with Paul Kagame, who would later become the Rwandan Minister of Defense; he is now President of Rwanda. Kagame, who was one of the rebel leaders at the time, would come to Kampala from time to time, and we would meet with him. The rebels held part at least of the northern section of Rwanda. On one occasion we had a visitor out from Washington, and I took him to the northern part of Rwanda. We crossed the bordewhich was held by the rebels — so he could meet with Kagame. Yes, we were talking.

Q: Had the great massacre that took place there, the genocide, did that take place while you were there?

SHIPPY: It did.

Q: Did we get involved in that, I mean your embassy?

SHIPPY: We didn't get involved in the Rwandan side of things, but bodies began showing up in Lake Victoria. They had floated down the river from Rwanda and were becoming a health menace as well as obviously a terrible thing. Our USAID director at the time, Keith Sherper, organized a multilateral effort to deal with the situation. They got bulldozers down to the area and made proper mass burials, if there is such a thing. (Villagers had been taking the bodies and burying them in shallow graves on the beaches, where dogs and pigs would dig them up. It was a terrible situation.)

Q: We weren't being called upon to go to the Ugandan government to use their influence to stop the atrocities.

SHIPPY: I believe we were. Actually I was on leave during the worst of that, but I believe we were. Museveni had no influence on the Hutus, who were the ones committing the atrocities. They considered him a Tutsi supporter.

Q: Yes, so in a way, were we concerned that we were seeing a Tutsi backlash or in other words the Tutsis were massing on the Ugandan soil to go back in?

SHIPPY: But they weren't; they were already in.

Q: So the supply line was a supply line for these troops?

SHIPPY: There were allegations that some supplies were going through Uganda.

Q: What about was Qadhafi doing anything while you were there?

SHIPPY: Let's see, that was the period where he would not agree to let those two guys stand trial, so we made...

Q: This was the Pan Am 103?

SHIPPY: Yes, Pan Am 103. We made various representations to Museveni asking him to weigh in. He felt some tie with Qadhafi because Qadhafi had helped Museveni when Museveni was in the bush, so there was not a lot of response on that issue.

Q: Did we have any, was this the time, there was a time when, I think it was some Americans who were kidnapped and killed? Was that during this time or not?

SHIPPY: No, and I don't even...

Q: Maybe I have got it wrong.

SHIPPY: Are you talking about the kidnapping from the gorilla park that took place, in 1998 or 1999?

Q: Oh, I see. So this is...

SHIPPY: Later, maybe 1998 or 1999.

Q: Well I take it things were on a fairly solid keel with...

SHIPPY: Right. Another comment, we saw a lot of different people. We also had conversations with John Garang, the rebel leader from southern Sudan, when he would come down to Kampala. He was the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army. He has a PhD in Agricultural Economics from Grinnell College in Iowa. So we would see him; we saw various interesting people.

Q: How was the Sudan situation? Did we see that, were we trying to play any role; from your perspective was the embassy doing anything?

SHIPPY: Many Sudanese refugees had crossed into Uganda. One time I made a visit up to the refugee camps. The refugee camps are not great places to live. Museveni and other East African leaders formed a group to try and negotiate the Sudanese issue. We were working on the Sudan issue more out of Nairobi than Uganda, so we as an embassy in Uganda were less involved than those in the US Embassy in Nairobi.

Q: What was your estimate and maybe the embassy's estimate of Museveni as a leader?

SHIPPY: I think Museveni is a leader who has a vision for his country. He has an idea of where he would like to go. He practiced tolerance, whereas many if not all of his predecessors when they came in would take vengeance against whoever they had kicked out or overthrown. Museveni tried to create an inclusive government that brought in representatives from all the different groups. He is articulate. He is very well educated. He speaks extremely well. He took a proactive approach to HIV/AIDS long before most other African leaders.

He has some ideas that we completely disagree with. Museveni's organization, the National Resistance Movement, NRM, is officially a “non-party.” It runs the country and is a party in everything but name, but political parties were not allowed to run candidates in elections. They were allowed to exist. They were allowed to have newspapers, rallies, but they couldn't, as a political party, run candidates. They obviously ran candidates, but the candidates couldn't say, “I am a member of X party.” Museveni's basis for this was that history in Uganda tied political parties into religious groups. The Catholics are one political party; Protestants are a different one.

Much of the violence in Uganda did in fact stem originally from the differences in the religious groups, beginning with missionaries. That translated into the political parties, so

Museveni believes that political parties are responsible for a great part of the violence that Uganda has suffered. Uganda has suffered dreadful violence. You have Idi Amin. And Milton Obote, who probably killed more people than Idi Amin, but didn't get the press Idi Amin did because Obote didn't have a vivid personality. Uganda has had a horrible time, and Museveni believed the political parties were responsible. That was the reason for his having a non-party and for the prohibitions on political parties, and full political party activity.

Ugandans approved a new constitution while I was there. As part of that process, the people voted as to whether they wanted to continue with the non-party state or have political parties. Then there was to be another vote on that issue in five years. The first vote confirmed the non-party status. As I say, I think there is another one that should be coming up. But obviously the people in the political parties don't like this at all. There were a lot of delegations to see us, to get us and others, the Europeans and other countries, to weigh in. We had many discussions with Museveni and his government about this, but so far it hasn't changed. All that said, the elections that took place when I was there were reasonably good elections. Again the candidates weren't identified by political party, but certainly the political parties were running candidates. The elections were reasonably good.

While I was in Uganda, Museveni was saying that he would serve as president for 10 years and then retire to his farm and go back to raising cattle. He is now saying something different. It seems to me he would be doing his country a great service if he would indeed step down and not get into this “I am the only person who can lead” attitude.

Q: Well now did his stand on AIDS which includes the use of condoms run across the Catholic Church?

SHIPPY: It did, and for a long time he, himself, did not promote the use of condoms. He didn't approve of that. He is a very religious person.

Q: He is Catholic?

SHIPPY: No, I don't think he is, but I don't remember what he is. Museveni was against the use of condoms at first, but eventually supported using them as a way to prevent HIV infection. I don't remember the Catholic Church saying anything against the campaign to promote the use of condoms. While it might have been better if he had spoken out sooner, in the end he did speak out for the use of condoms. Many other people and organizations, including newspapers, promoted the use of condoms.

Q: How about Uganda on the international field? Did you find them reasonably supportive in the UN and other places?

SHIPPY: Reasonably so. They would not take a position opposed to an OAU (Organization of African Unity, now known as the African Union) position.

Q: So the lobby for that went on in each country.

SHIPPY: Let me just go back to HIV/AIDS a minute. It was an interesting situation. There is a reasonable percentage of Muslims in Uganda. The woman who did the HIV/AIDS projects for USAID had a project going with Muslims. She had a project going with the Catholic Church, obviously not promoting condoms. She had a program going with the Army. Just to have a USAID program connected in any way with an army is very unusual. You have to get all sorts of special permission. People across all categories recognized the problem, and that something had to be done. To go back to the other issue, the US embassies in each country lobbied on all the different issues.

Q: Were there any other issues we haven't touched on?

SHIPPY: We tried to promote U.S. investment, but it was a hard sell. Uganda is very far away, and it is not a traditional market, so a lot of work will have to continue to be done

on that one. But some of the steps that Museveni was taking to make the country a place where the rule of law prevails, all that helped.

Q: While you were there, was Idi Amin at all a figure? He was still in Saudi Arabia. Was he at all a figure?

SHIPPY: No.

Q: Well then in 1994 you left.

SHIPPY: In 1994 I left and I went into the Senior Seminar.

Q: You did that for a year.

SHIPPY: That is right, from basically late August to the end of May, nine months.

Q: How did you find the Senior Seminar?

SHIPPY: It is a great way to spend nine months.

Q: Did it open any new vistas for you?

SHIPPY: It exposed me to new things and new ideas. I already had an appreciation for the military. We had a very strong IMET program in Kampala, which I ran. But being in a class with military officers and visiting military bases as we did gave me a broader, deeper appreciation of the military and what they do and the demands on them. I visited parts of the country that I hadn't been to before, for example, we did a trip to the south. We had lectures by very interesting people, including former Secretaries of State James Baker and George Shultz; and talked with very interesting Americans on our trips to different parts of the country. It was all very mind-expanding.

Q: Well then where did you go after the senior seminar, this would be 1992?

SHIPPY: No, 1994-1995. I spent six weeks doing Oral Exams for people who had passed the Foreign Service Written Exam, in BEX (the Board of Examiners). That was interesting, but six weeks was enough.

Q: What was your impression of the candidates?

SHIPPY: They were generally very good. We obviously didn't pass everyone, but they were almost all of very high quality.

Q: So we are up to 1995, then where?

SHIPPY: I became the Director of the Office of Science, Technology and Health in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES/STH).

Q: You did that for how long?

SHIPPY: Two years more or less, not quite two years.

Q: Who was the head of the bureau?

SHIPPY: As I recall, the Assistant Secretary position was vacant. Eleanor Constable had been Assistant Secretary and had left. A woman named Eileen Claussen came in as a political appointee. She had been head of the Environmental Section in the National Security Council, and had worked very closely with Vice President Al Gore. Her background was environmental non-governmental organizations.

Q: Well you were there, we are talking about 1995 to 1997?

SHIPPY: Right.

Q: And with the head being from out of the Gore camp who was quite strong on the environment, this must have, did this, was environment much in your area or was it somewhere else?

SHIPPY: No, my office didn't do environment. That was other offices. Claussen's interest was strictly environment, and she basically decimated my office. By the time I left it was completely decimated.

Q: It must have been pretty discouraging.

SHIPPY: It was. I was there two years, and it didn't hurt me personally, but for the civil servants who worked in that office it was very discouraging.

Q: What was she doing, just lobbying them, taking them and putting them on...

SHIPPY: There was a Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) in charge of Science, Technology and Health; a DAS in charge of Environmental Affairs and a DAS in charge of Ocean Affairs. Claussen wanted a PDAS (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary) position. The Department would not give her an additional position, so she took the Science DAS, and made that position the PDAS. The person who had been the Science DAAnne Solomon, wife of former Ambassador to the Philippines Richard Solomon, and a political appointee in the DAS jowas let go so that Claussen could put her Environmental person in the PDAS position. By that time the Health part of the office I headed had been moved into a separate office. The Technology part of the office was simply abolished. The Science part of the office was kept as a small office reporting to the DAS for Ocean Affairs.

Q: So what were you doing, other than watching your office disappear?

SHIPPY: Before my arrival, OES/STH, working with the NSC, had come up with a book on the U.S. Government's international policies with respect to HIV/AIDS, a well-respected book. We worked with NIH, the National Institutes of Health, and various other interested

parties. Disseminating that book and taking recommended action was an ongoing issue for us.

Q: Could you take any new initiatives?

SHIPPY: Yes, our intent was to take the next step: to implement the international HIV/AIDS policy, but then, as I said, a separate office was created to do that. We continued to work with them, but it was a separate office.

On the technology side, that section was headed by Bud Rock, a Foreign Service Officer who went from there to be Science Attach# in Paris and is now Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in OES. He was very good and did a lot of work with industry, with other government agencies, basically promoting U.S. technology and doing what we could to promote the use of U.S. technology overseas.

The Science Section, headed by a Civil Service Officer named Ralph Braibanti, did the international aspects of the space program. So, for example, when the space shuttle was launched, he would form a little task force that went up to the Operations Center and would stay there until the launch took place and the shuttle was up high enough that it would not need an emergency landing. We have contingency emergency landing sites around the world, negotiated agreements. We did the same drill when the space shuttle was going to land. That is one aspect. We dealt with the issues of U.S. satellites being launched by foreign countries, China or wherever. We made sure the proper permissions were in place. With respect to GPS (Global Positioning System), we had a GPS Working Group with the NSC. The official U.S. Government GPS policy was rolled out while I was in OES/STH. Our office was beginning negotiations with the Japanese, the Russians, and the Europeans to try to get agreement that the US GPS would be the world standard. That was an ongoing project. The work on science issues continued, but in a small office that is strictly science.

Q: Well, after this, I take it that it was not a happy time.

SHIPPY: No, the first part was fine, but when Claussen started breaking up the office, it wasn't particularly happy. I remember one time at a staff meeting, she had drawn up a list of her priorities and science was not on it. I asked about that, and she said something like, “Science is important. I accept that, but it is not my priority and it is not going to be on this list.”

Q: So I take it you started looking to go elsewhere.

SHIPPY: Well, my tour was finishing in any case. The interesting thing about that is that a lot of her environmental programs depended on satellites up in the sky, which were there at least partly because of the work of the OES/STH Science Section. In the fall of 1996, I was looking at the bid list as one does every two years. As I later learned, Claussen had recommended me for an ambassadorial position. We always got along fine personally; I didn't have a problem with her personally. She had a great sense of humor; she was nice, so that was not an issue. Anyway, she recommended me for an ambassadorial position, and I ended up being nominated to be US Ambassador to Malawi.

Q: Did you have any problem getting confirmation or anything like that?

SHIPPY: There was no problem, it was just that Senator John Ashcroft was the head of the Senate Subcommittee on Africa at that time. As far as we could tell, he didn't have a whole lot of interest in Africa. At that point, he was interested in his religious bill, which eventually passed, the Religious Freedom Act, and he was also contemplating whether to run for president. So he didn't get around to holding hearings until late September; whereas normally we would have been at post by the end of the summer. He held hearings in late September for Susan Rice, the new AF (Bureau of African Affairs) Assistant Secretary. The five of us who had been nominated as ambassadors to African countries got to tag along with Rice, and thus got our hearings. There was no problem with

any of us. We were confirmed by the Senate in November. At that point, I stayed to have Christmas with my family in Albuquerque — my father was 89 years old — and then went out to Malawi in early January of 1998.

I would also like to mention that in early 1997, while my pre-nomination paperwork was working its way through the system, I participated in a Capstone course. Capstone is the military's six-week program for new flag officers. Each Capstone class has a place for one person of equivalent rank from the Department of State. It was an extraordinary opportunity to create bonds with up-and-coming senior military officers, and to gain more in-depth knowledge of the military from a senior perspective.

Q: Well you were in Malawi from...

SHIPPY: 1998 to 2000. Maybe we could do this some other time?

Q: All right, then we will pick up Malawi. What is the capital of Malawi?

SHIPPY: Lilongwe.

Q: Lilongwe, okay, we will pick this up next time in 1998, and we are off to Malawi.

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Today is September 19, 2002. Could you explain a bit about the history of Malawi? It just kind of sits there in the southern part of Africa. How did it come into being?

SHIPPY: Malawi is a long, thin, narrow country with a territory about the size of Pennsylvania, and a lake the size of New Hampshire. Lake Malawi is 20% of its territory. It has few natural resources. It has land and it has people. The people, except for one group that came from South Africa, have generally been either farming or fishing folk, generally peaceful. The first Europeans who came in were Presbyterian Scots, and they had a great influence on the development of the country. The reason Malawi was created as a country

is that when boundary lines were being drawn, what is now Mozambique basically wanted to include a large part of Malawi, but Mozambique had been colonized by the Portuguese. The Presbyterian Scots didn't want to be part of something that was Portuguese, and insisted that Malawi be kept separate.

Q: When was this? Are we talking about the 19th century?

SHIPPY: Yes.

Q: During the cutting up of Africa.

SHIPPY: Yes, it was the 19th century. Britain was the colonial power in Malawi. It was a British Protectorate. In the 1950s, the British wanted to create a federation of the states which are now Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi. (Then they were, respectively, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.) The people of Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia didn't want this because they believed that all of the power would go to the whites in Southern Rhodesia. But the federation was created, called the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

A sidebar: Nyasa means lake. What is now Lake Malawi was known under the British as Lake Nyasa, which makes it one of those repeated word sequences: lake lake. (As the “Sahara desert” is “desert desert.”)

The Federation lasted from 1953 to 1963. Hastings Kamuzu Banda was born in Malawi, studied medicine in the United States and Scotland, and had practiced in England and Ghana. He was in Ghana when the Federation became an issue. Banda was talked into returning to Malawi and taking part in what became the liberation struggle. The Federation broke up; Malawi was granted its independence in 1964. In 1966, Banda became Malawi's first president.

From playing a positive role in the country's struggle for independence, Banda moved fairly quickly into a dictator role. He was named “President for life” in 1971, and was President for almost 30 years. He didn't consider himself a dictator, but regarded himself as an elder of the Scots Presbyterian Church, and as an African Paramount Chief. He “knew” what was best for his people; he knew better than they, and therefore made decisions for them. Banda made the decisions about where money should go. Malawi's largest export crop is tobacco. It was and it still is. He said that small farmers could not grow tobacco, that only large estates could grow tobacco. That was one of his decisions. Banda was very conservative, and had rules about length of skirts or dresses that women could wear. Women couldn't wear sleeveless dresses, for example; men couldn't wear bell bottoms. (The dress codes of Zanzibar and Malawi were very similar.)

Eventually the Malawi people agitated for democracy. In 1993, Banda agreed to have a referendum as to whether there should be multiparty elections. The general consensus seems to be that he believed the people would vote the way he thought they should vote, and defeat this referendum. They didn't; a majority voted to have multiparty elections. There was pressure from donor governments; there was pressure from the Catholic Church and other churches. All this, including the results of the referendum, combined to get him to the point where he accepted the results of the referendum, and the country prepared for multiparty elections. Again, the general consensus is that he assumed that he would win.

I was told that you had to belong to Banda's political party, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), to do almost anything. In order to get on a bus, for example, you had to show your membership card. I even heard one story that if you were pregnant you had to buy a membership card for your unborn child in order to get on a bus, to shop, or whatever. Banda took action against Asians in the country, these being people from South Asia, or of South Asian ancestry. Banda said that Asian shops could not be out in the countryside; they could be located only in major urban centers, so many Asians had to move in to the

cities. Banda had a paramilitary group called the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP) which acted as his enforcement arm. They spied on their neighbors. They enforced his rulings. They did what Banda needed to have done.

Q: Did anything replace the Asians?

SHIPPY: Malawi African shop owners would take over. I heard a story about a group that he expelled from the country. It was a group of Goans (or of Goan ancestry). Goans often have a club where they are, and there was a Goan club in Blantyre, which is the largest city in Malawi. Apparently Banda was speaking on the radio and one of the members turned the radio off. That was reported to Banda, and he expelled all the Goans in Blantyre.

Back to the paramilitary group, the MYP: the MYP had run-ins with the Army. There was an incident in Mzuzu, the largest city in the north of Malawi, in which a couple of MYP thugs killed two soldiers. Soldiers then came out of the barracks in Mzuzu to take care of the MYP there. Then soldiers all over the country came out; the officers came out soon thereafter and took control of the soldiers, with the goal of disarming the MYP and removing it as a force in Malawi. It took about ten days for the Army to disarm the MYP. There was killing and it was bloody, but the Army disarmed the MYP. (There was, however, continued speculation, even when I was in Malawi, about “unaccounted for” MYP weapons.) After that, the Army returned to the barracks. The Army did not try to take power. The Army sees itself as the upholder of the Constitution, not of any particular government or person, an uncommon attitude for an African army.

Q: It is.

SHIPPY: Thus the MYP was removed as a force which could influence elections, and when multiparty elections were held, Banda didn't have an enforcement arm. But again, the consensus seemed to be that he expected to win the election, and there were no real attempts to rig the election as has happened in other countries. He lost. The United

Democratic Front (UDF), a coalition of small parties, won the election; the head of the UDF, Bakili Muluzi won the presidency. To give him credit, Banda conceded the election and stepped down peacefully when the result of the election was clear, but before all the ballots had been counted. He went into retirement in Malawi, which is unusual for an African former president. (Banda passed his years in retirement quietly. He was in his 90s when he died in 1997.)

By 1994 Malawi had a democratically elected president and Parliament, and a functioning multiparty democracy. Banda's party, the Malawi Congress Party, continued to function and had representatives in Parliament. It was an interesting transfer of power. In many countries, getting rid of a 30-year dictator would have been accomplished only with great bloodshed. It didn't happen that way in Malawi. In Malawi, it was a peaceful transfer of power, with the exception of the one brief episode where the Army stepped in. The divisions in Malawi are not particularly religious, as is the case in Uganda, for example. Nor are they tribal. Malawians classify people by region of the country. You are from the north or from the center or from the south. These divisions create problems, but to my mind, they aren't as difficult to deal with as either religious or tribal differences would be.

Q: Well then, you had your hearings and all that. Any problem with the hearings?

SHIPPY: No. I was asked one question about religious freedom. Banda had persecuted Seventh Day Adventists because they wouldn't acknowledge the authority of the state. But with the new government, there were no problems.

Q: You were out there from...

SHIPPY: January of 1998 through August of 2000.

Q: Did we have when you went out there, was there any issue that we were particularly interested in there?

SHIPPY: HIV/AIDS severely affects Malawi. Economic and development assistance in general. Malawi is a very poor country, and doesn't have oil, gas, minerals, whatever to sell. Tobacco forms a huge percentage of their exports, well over 50%, so while there is no immediate emergency, in the long term they do have to find something to replace tobacco.

Q: Did they have the same thing that happened in Zimbabwe where a small group of white farmers sort of dominated the agricultural field?

SHIPPY: Not so much. There were large estates, because, as I said, Banda didn't let small farmers grow tobacco. In fact, he didn't let small farmers grow export crops. Small farmers were allowed to grow corn, vegetables, things that they would eat or sell on the local market. Of the large estates, some were held by white farmers; there were a couple of South Asian families who had estates. And there was a big corporation called Press Corporation that was basically the Government's corporation, Banda's corporation, which ran large estates.

Q: How did you find when you got there, was the government that was in place by the time you got there interested in the United States and contact with them at all?

SHIPPY: Very definitely. We were either the first or second largest aid donor to Malawi, depending on what Japan provides in any particular year. Malawians are a friendly, warm people, and they like the United States, so, yes, relations are very good. Commercial relations are not particularly thriving. Malawi looks to Zimbabwe and South Africa traditionally as its largest trading partners and then to Britain. So getting the U.S. involved is a huge selling job on the U.S. side and on the Malawi side, and they don't have the money to do big projects that bring in U.S. companies.

Q: The AIDS epidemic, how had by the time you got there in '98, how had the AIDS epidemic hit Malawi?

SHIPPY: A lot of people had died, were dying, children left orphans, grandparents having to raise a second family because they were raising their grandchildren. Often it is the educated people who are the ones first hit by AIDS. In a country where the pool of educated people is fairly small, AIDS is a major factor. Teachers are another group that is severely hit, also health workers. In all of these instances, Malawi can't afford to lose these educated professionals. Banda, although he was a trained physician and had practiced as a doctor, denied the existence of HIV/AIDS. It was a taboo subject in Malawi in his timnot mentioned in or by the media, certainly not discussed publicly. There was no education about it and no discussion of how to prevent it. This policy was a real tragedy for Malawians.

Q: What could we do about it?

SHIPPY: We had a USAID HIV/AIDS program that was very strong and that I supported. I thought it was important to get the President and the Government actively involved. Malawians are a very conservative people. My last overseas post had been Uganda. There people talk about everything, and President Museveni is a strong vocal leader against HIV/AIDS, as is his wife. They have a monthly supplement for children in the newspaper that talks about sex and bodily organs and functions, very graphic. Malawians were not doing any of that. The President was not talking about it. The government ministers were not talking about it. One of my goals was to get the President and the Cabinet vocal about HIV/AIDS and get it discussed frequently and everywhere. By the time I left, the President had spoken publicly about it, and had publicly promised that he would take action to make sure the Malawi HIV/AIDS program was a good one and was effective. He had prominent billboards put up about HIV/AIDS. Shortly after I left, a Minister talked publicly about one of his close relatives dying of AIDS. For a conservative country, these steps were significant.

Q: What was the thrust of our work, I mean to get people to use condoms?

SHIPPY: That was part of it. Practice safe sex, and there are various ways to do that. You can use condoms; you can abstain. You can have only one partner. (The Malawians were beginning to think about using the Ugandan “ABC” campaigAbstain; if you can't, Be faithful; if you can't, use Condoms.) Another part of the problem is traditional practices that contribute to somebody having more than one partner. By the time I left, there were groups that were trying to change traditional practices, substituting something else that wouldn't endanger lives. There was a traditional practice which involved a needle, not drug use, and not injections, but some part of a traditional practice. One group was trying to get that done differently, again to keep the spirit of the tradition, but to change the practice so that it wouldn't endanger lives.

Q: Were you able to get out quite a bit and talk to schools?

SHIPPY: I traveled a lot.

Q: AID was working on various projects or was this concentrated on AIDS?

SHIPPY: No, USAID had five areas of concentration: education, health including HIV/AIDS, democracy/governance, private enterprise, and agriculture.

Q: Did events in South Africa have an effect, you know, the fact South Africa was now free of apartheid. Did that have a ripple effect at all or had that never been anything that Malawi was concerned with?

SHIPPY: Banda was the only African leader who maintained contact with the South African apartheid regime. Thus, Malawi was a pariah in the rest of Africa. Getting rid of the apartheid regime helped, and when Banda left, having a new government in Malawi helped. Malawi was an integrated part of Southern Africa and Africa again.

IQ: Were there any aspects of international relations playing a role there? I am thinking of by this time the Soviet Union was long gone I guess, but North Korea, Taiwan?

SHIPPY: Malawi had relations with Taiwan, not with Mainland China, and will probably maintain relations with Taiwan as long as they get more money that way.

Q: Was there any problem with terrorism or anything like that there?

SHIPPY: No. The bombings in Nairobi and Dar happened in August of 1998, and affected what we did and our security stance. The government was completely supportive in what we asked them for, and publicly supported us; it was very helpful.

Q: Who was president when you were there?

SHIPPY: Bakili Muluzi.

Q: Was he easy to talk to?

SHIPPY: Very easy. He is a natural politician. He is very affable and easy going and likes to talk and likes to schmooze with people; he was very easy to deal with in that respect.

Q: What sorts of things was the embassy looking at in Malawi? It sounds like human rights wasn't of much concern any more was it?

SHIPPY: That's right. There were still some human rights issues. Police had a long way to go, for example, in treatment of prisoners, but it was as much due to lack of training and lack of resources as anything else. There certainly was not a government policy that we had to deal with. Our principal issues were economic, social development and health issues.

Q: You were there during the Clinton administration, and the Clinton administration is the first administration to really follow through on the idea that smoking is bad for you. We are talking about tobacco.

SHIPPY: The three major tobacco companies were American owned. It was “follow the trail and eventually you find an American company at the top.” Sometime during my first year in Malawi, the State Department published a new policy on tobacco that said we could give American companies involved in tobacco the same kind of support we gave any other company. In other words if they were not being treated fairly by the government, we could talk to the government, but we could not do anything that would promote the sale of tobacco. And, when possible, we were to support efforts to stop the use of tobacco. The tobacco companies in Malawi had a problem with getting work permits renewed for their foreign workers, who held senior positions in the Malawi operations. One of the government officials in the approval process didn't want to renew the permits on the basis that the tobacco companies had not brought Malawians in and trained them so that they could do the jobs, when Malawians were quite capable of doing the jobs. He believed that these foreigners were taking jobs that Malawians should have been handling. There was some speculation that part of his attitude was because he had worked for one of the tobacco companies as a young man. It hadn't gone well, and he had left the company. In any case, we were able to help the companies, and they achieved an agreement with the government that they could live with. They got fewer permits than they wanted, but enough so they could manage. So that worked out. But we were always very much aware of the U.S. policy and what we could and couldn't do.The USAID agricultural project did a lot on trying to develop substitutes for tobacco. The problem is that for the same amount of inputs, time, fertilizer, seeds, so forth and so on, the return from tobacco is more than the return from other crops. We were experimenting with specialty vegetables for the European market. Cargill, an American seed company (among other things), worked on cotton for awhile. But as of the time I left, nothing had really been found that worked. Part of the problem is that when you are developing perishable goods for the European market, be they vegetables or flowers, you need direct flights to go to Europe, and there were no direct flights out of Malawi, so transportation was a problem.

One interesting sidelight: Lake Malawi has a class of fish called cichlids. The varieties in Lake Malawi are unique to that lake; they don't appear anywhere else. There is a very small business that exports these cichlids, mostly to Europe and Japan, although you can find some in the U.S., for fresh water aquariums.

Q: Did you get involved in how Malawi votes in the general assembly of the United Nations?

SHIPPY: Yes, every ambassador does that. We get instructions from Washington and you try to convince the host country to vote with the US. Malawi generally voted with the OAU; it rarely stepped out and did something different. I believe there was one occasion before my time when Malawi voted with the US, and not with the OAU, but it was extremely rare for that to happen.

Q: Do we have much in the way of exchange programs?

SHIPPY: We have Fulbright, both Americans coming to Malawi and Malawians going to the U.S. A former Foreign Service Officer who now teaches at a teacher's college in Wisconsin and had served in Malawi, started a program to improve teaching in Malawi. Four Malawi teachers start as freshmen at this college every year and go through the whole four-year degree program. Then they go back to Malawi to use their new skills. We take people who have already taught for awhile and aren't just out of university. That program was going very well.

Q: Any consular problems or did you get much in the way of people coming there?

SHIPPY: No, Malawi is not particularly a route for other nationalities. It is expensive to go to the United States, and most Malawians don't have money, so we didn't have huge consular issues. One interesting factor about Malawi is that the capital is Lilongwe. The major city and major commercial and financial center is Blantyre, which was about three hours drive south on Malawi roads. But the President was in Blantyre. For the

first year I was in Malawi, the Parliament was in another little town, Zomba, which is another hour beyond Blantyre. They finally moved the Parliament up to Lilongwe. With the President mostly in Blantyre, that meant that when you saw him, you planned on an overnight journey. He would occasionally be in Lilongwe, but generally not when you had instructions from Washington to meet with him.

Q: So how big was your staff?

SHIPPY: I had 27 direct hire Americans, a total of all agencies.

Q: Was there enough to keep a political officer and an economic officer busy?

SHIPPY: We had a Political/Consular Officer who theoretically was supposed to spend half time on political issues and half time on consular issues. He was always overwhelmed; there was too much work for one officer in those two areas. The Econ/Commercial Officer kept busy. Among other things, we have a very active Self Help Program, whereby we give small grants to communities to do projects, often income generating projects. We had a Self Help Coordinator, but the Economic Officer puts a fair amount of time in on that program.

Q: What kind of self help, this is where you give $1,000 or something like that to an individual or a group to go out and start something?

SHIPPY: Yes, never to an individual, always to a group. And we generally gave smaller amounts, from $200 to $700. We had mills to grind corn. We gave money once to a community to help them install a water system. They lived on the side of a very large and high plateau in northern Malawi, and rivers came off the plateau with a lot of energy. The community tapped into the river at a high altitude, and then put in bamboo pipes to bring the water down to the village. They put iby hand — about eight kilometers of bamboo pipes. The water pressure was so high that they had to add additional outlets, because the water pressure was bursting the pipes where they joined. It was a very impressive

project. We helped a community start a tree nursery of both ornamental and fruit trees. What else did we do? We helped fund a multi-purpose room in a community. We helped fund a knitting project. We did a chicken project with one group; we have done small bridges and grain mills. One of the things I liked best about the Self Help Projects was that they provided a continual reason for me to travel to visit them or to be present at the ceremonies marking their completion. And since they were all over the country, I managed to cover pretty much all of Malawi. Great fun, even though most of the roads were terrible!

Q: Did you have Peace Corps?

SHIPPY: We did.

Q: How did they do?

SHIPPY: Very well. When I was there, there were about 100 Peace Corps volunteers in the country. They did HIV/AIDS and child survival. We had some teachers, mostly at secondary schools. We had natural resources people who worked with the Malawi Parks Association. Those were the major projects.

Q: Were there any big game parks or things like that there?

SHIPPY: Yes, there are a few, and some wonderful ones. Although Malawi doesn't have the variety or quantity of game that Zambia or South Africa does, the Malawi parks are well worth visiting.

Q: I take it you didn't have any presidential visits or things like that.

SHIPPY: No.

Q: This is tape four, side one with Ellen Shippy. Yes.

SHIPPY: We had two delegations of Congressional staffers scheduled, but the first group was called back to the Hill before they reached Malawi, and the other one was canceled before it started out. I understand this year Malawi has had some senior visits, but it didn't happen while I was there. Andy Young transited Lilongwe once. We met him at the airport and took him on a quick tour of the citat night and in the rain. The Deputy Commander of US forces, European Command came once or twice. And that was about it in terms of high level visitors.

That does, however, remind me of a good story. When Nancy Powell was PDAS in the African Bureau, she visited Malawi. Marcia Bernicat, my female DCM and I accompanied Nancy on a call on the female Malawian Principal Secretary for Defense. It suddenly occurred to us as we were talking about defense issues, that the occasion was a firsfour women in senior positions in the US and Malawian governments, talking about defense. We very much enjoyed the moment.

Q: In the sort of pecking order, how many countries were represented there?

SHIPPY: Britain, Germany, Denmark, the EU, Taiwan; UN organizations such UNDP, WHO; and some African countries: South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe; were represented in Malawi. Egypt was there. But there were not a large number of missions.

Q: Was Great Britain sort of a major outside influence there, or had the United States more...

SHIPPY: No, I think the United States had moved into that. We had a larger embassy; we had a larger aid program. Certainly Great Britain, their High Commission, has a significant impact and played a key role. Prior to parliamentary elections, there was a lot of violence, and it was increasing. Neither opposition political party, nor the Government, was doing anything to stop it. We had a donor group that met once a week. The donors made representations to the Government and to the political parties, and the excessive violence

was greatly reduced. I think the British and the U.S. were the two key players on that one. The Danes were also influential in democracy and governance issues.

Q: Were there any major incidents or issues that took place while you were there?

SHIPPY: You mean between Malawi and...

Q: That affected your work, earthquakes, war.

SHIPPY: No. The bombings, the east African embassy bombings were the biggest. Zimbabwe had started to go downhill before I left, but the full impact had not yet hit Malawi.

Q: Well, was there any spillover from Mugabe's beginning to get rid of the white settlers and the consequent decline in Zimbabwe's productivity?

SHIPPY: Malawi traditionally imports a lot of foodstuffs from Zimbabwe as well as other items, soaps and such. So the Zimbabwe situation affected things in Malawi. Goods weren't coming over like they would normally. The other Malawi concern was there are about a million people whose families originally came from Malawi who live in Zimbabwe. These people don't have Zimbabwe citizenship and have lost Malawi citizenship. There was a concern then, and there probably still is, about that group of people. If they were ever forced out of Zimbabwe, they would obviously go to Malawi. The Malawi Government had to start thinking about what it would do in that situation

Q: Would you say the people of Malawi were sort of content with what you are describing, didn't have any vast resources, but hadn't been torn by tribalism or war or something. Do people learn to live a good solid life do you think?

SHIPPY: I think so. For one thing most people were very happy that the dictatorship was no longer around, that they were free to express their opinions and vote. But people want better things for their children, so education is a major issue there. Most people are not

happy with the education because the public schools are often not very good; they lack materials, equipment and qualified teachers.

Q: Of course AIDS has compounded the problem.

SHIPPY: Right.

Q: What about missionaries? Were American missionaries there?

SHIPPY: There were. That was a large part of the American population in Malawi. There is no problem with their doing missionary work. As I said, missionaries were Malawi's first exposure to Europeans; some people thought there were benefits and others didn't. But missionaries were not really an issue in Malawi. Many of the missions run schools or hospitals or clinics and contribute in that way to Malawi.

Q: Well by the time you left there, were things sort of the feeling Malawi had gone through a shakedown period regarding democracy and it was pretty well in place?

SHIPPY: Reasonably well. Muluzi is now in his second term. That election went well, and it was democratic. But the Malawi Constitution limits him to two terms, and he would like a third term. That issue is active. Malawi has corruption problems, some involving senior officials, including members of the Cabinet, heads of State agencies, etc. Malawi has made some attempts to deal with that issue. There is an Anti-Corruption Commission that looks into corruption charges and makes recommendations about whether the case should be prosecuted or not, so there is some attempt to deal with that issue. For awhile Malawi was considered to have the most viable multiparty system in Southern Africa, maybe in Africa, because the opposition party was a viable, active party. But now, the opposition party has split and is no longer quite so viable. So Malawi could go either way. It could get itself together and continue to have a couple of really strong parties, or it could go back to basically a one party state.

Q: How was the military? During the time you were there, were they still in the barracks and minding themselves?

SHIPPY: Yes. In fact that is the one area that I haven't really talked about so far. We did a lot of activities with the Malawi Army. Malawi was one of the first countries in Southern Africa to agree to join the African Crisis Response Initiative, so we had a lot of dealings with the Army. The Army was still apolitical, and believed strongly in that. The Commander and the Deputy Commander of the Army were both very sincere in that attitude. We had many different US Special Forces groups come through to do Joint Combined Exercises (JCETs) where they worked with the Malawi Army. We had many visits from US Special Forces groups in connection with ACRI. The purpose of ACRI was to build up a military cadre in each participating country, which, in the event of need, could be sent to another country to assist, so that U.S. troops wouldn't have to go. The Malawians responded positively to the training they received, and it was a very successful operation in Malawi.

Q: Well it sounds like you had a good tour there.

SHIPPY: I did indeed.

Q: So you came back in 2000.

SHIPPY: August of 2000.

Q: To the job you have now?

SHIPPY: Right.

Q: You might explain what you are doing now.

SHIPPY: I am the Dean of the School of Professional and Area Studies (SPAS) in the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). I was derailed somewhat at the beginning. In the last three months before I left Malawi I was dealing with very severe back pain. My first stop in the

U.S. on my return was Seattle, and I had back surgery there. I recovered, came here and started my job, but the back pain returned. In February of 2001, I had three lower vertebrae fused, so those first several months here at FSI were not my most productive. (The second surgery did the trick, and I've been fine since then.)

Q: FSI has really changed quite a bit in its thrust hasn't it in the last few years, much more I mean trying to get people better prepared when they go overseas?

SHIPPY: What SPAS does has stayed pretty much the same. We have always provided orientation to newcomers: A-100, a seven week orientation course for Junior Officers; a three week orientation course for Specialists; and a three day orientation course for members of the Civil Service. We provide skills training for the now five career tracks (formerly called “cones”) of the Foreign Service: management, consular, economic, political, and public diplomacy. And we provide area studies training. We have always done that, but we believe we are doing it better than we used to do. We are including leadership and management modules in our courses. We now have a division for Office Management Specialists, which provides training. There is now an emphasis on FSN training, which a few years ago did not exist. So there have been changes, but we are doing what we have always done, only doing it better and more focused. The new FSI focus, and that of the Department, is on the Leadership and Management School, which was created a few years ago.

Q: Is that under your...

SHIPPY: No, that's a different School.

Q: You had been through the system before, I imagine that things really perked up from training when we moved to these new facilities here in the early 1990s.

SHIPPY: Yes, it made a huge difference. I wasn't here when the move actually happened, but just having a campus where everything is in one place makes a very positive difference in the experience of training.

Q: Well, Ellen, I guess we may end at this point.

SHIPPY: Excuse me, let me say just one thing about what we are doing now. The challenge that SPAS is facing now and that the other schools at FSI are facing to some extent now, and will be facing more in the future, is the increased number of new hires that are being brought into the State Department under the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative (DRI). The number of Junior Officers has doubled for FY-02 and for each of the next two fiscal years. DRI is Secretary Powell's initiative. From 1994 to 1997 we were hiring at only 53% of attrition. We are facing huge shortages at the FS-03 level right now, soon to be at the FS-02 level. DRI is an attempt to make up the numbers and also to create a “training float” so it will be easier for people to take training courses. Hiring numbers will then go back to hiring at attrition levels. But what it means is all these new people come first to SPAS for orientation. Our Junior Officer classes now average 95 to 98 people per class as opposed to the old 40 or 45.

Q: When I came in in 1955 I think we had about 22.

SHIPPY: Specialist classes have gone from 35 or 40 up into the 70s or 80s. A Specialist class starting Monday will have 93 Specialists. We are dealing with these numbers right now, and then the students move on after A-100 or Specialist Orientation into professional skills training — Consular, Management, Economic, Political, Public Diplomacand area studies. So all of our divisions are facing these increased numbers, as are the other Schools at FSI (Language, Applied Information Technology, Leadership and Management, the Transition Center). Our commitment is to train all of our new hires and maintain our high quality training.

Q: Have you found it hard to recruit particularly Foreign Service officers, serving Foreign Service officers to teach in these classes because this has always been, you want to have the best and the brightest having some work in training others coming up. I mean West Point and Annapolis have always worked very hard to do that. So going back to my time it was hard to get people you know, who are on the fast track to give a little something to the system rather than what is in it for me.

SHIPPY: Yes, there are jobs that we have difficulty filling and others that we don't. I think we have enough promotions out of FSI to show that working here doesn't hurt you. But where we really have problems filling positions is at the FS-03 level, because of the scarcity of FS-03 officers.

Q: Well, Ellen, thank you.

End of interview